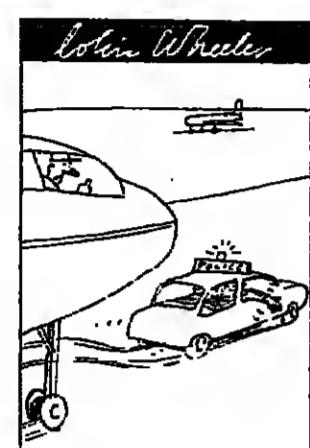




Buildings to knock
down for the
millennium PAGE 29



Sixties style
to die for



Pilots and air controllers to be tested for drink

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

The police are to be given new powers to test pilots, air-traffic controllers and maintenance engineers for alcohol and drug abuse. The Department of Transport initiative comes after concerns that aviation workers, including 41,000 commercial and private pilots, may be operating while under the influence of drink or drugs. At present the police have no power to breathalyse

or take a blood sample from a pilot or air-traffic controller.

A limit of about 20mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood will be used – equivalent to about one glass of wine or half a pint of lager – which is effectively a zero tolerance level. The DoT has yet to finalise the details but they have told police chiefs that they intend to introduce the changes later in the year.

Drinking is thought to be a bigger problem than drug-taking in the aviation world, which can involve extreme pressure and long hours. A DoT consultative paper says: "The CAA [Civil Aviation Authority] believe that alcohol is a contributory factor in a number of aircraft accidents each year. However, the true scope of the problem is hard to assess in the absence of testing."

At any one time, between 40 and 50 professional pilots are being counselled by the CAA for alcohol related problems. Since 1976 there have been nine known cases where pilots were drunk while flying a light aircraft

– in four they crashed and were killed.

There have been two known incidents involving drunken commercial pilots, although both were prevented from flying. In the past eight years the CAA has been notified of eight cases of drug use, all involving cannabis.

The new powers are to target Britain's 29,000 private pilots, 11,500 commercial pilots, 1,900 air-traffic controllers and 15,000 maintenance engineers. They have been prompted by the need to comply with a European Union directive which requires all member countries to ensure that by April 1999 flight crews do not work with more than 20mg of alcohol to 100ml blood.

Police officers are expected to use their new powers in two key areas – when they attend an air accident and believe that a person has been drinking or taking drugs, and when they believe that an offence is about to be committed, for example if a pilot has been drinking in a bar shortly before an aircraft takes off. Random testing will not take place.

Peter Sharp, Chief Constable of Hertfordshire and head of the Association of Chief Police Officers' working party on the issue, said: "At the moment we cannot take a breath test unless the subject agrees voluntarily. We believe the new power will be useful to help deal with allegations or accidents where alcohol is believed to be involved."

A DoT spokesman said: "It seems odd that there is no limit at the moment. It will be some time before there is any announcement."

Doctors reveal NHS is failing

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The National Health Service is in the midst of a winter crisis of delays to operations and ward and hospital closures, according to a leaked paper drawn up for doctors' leaders yesterday.

Labour called for an emergency Commons statement from the Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, as Britain experienced snow and freezing conditions, with accident and emergency centres across Britain reporting rapid increases in demand, leaving many stretched to the limit and some unable to cope.

Hospitals are telling GPs not to refer any more patients until April when money comes available for the next financial year.

In response, some GPs are advising patients to refer themselves to accident departments. The flu epidemic has also added to the strain on the NHS, with more patients, and staff going down sick at the busiest times.

The crisis is certain to become part of the general election battle. Labour have guaranteed to match the £1.2bn increase for the NHS next year, but have refused to make pledges about more money for future years.

BMA sources said they believed the crisis was probably the worst to hit the NHS in a decade.

Although it was made worse by the flu epidemic, the core problem, doctors believe, is a chronic shortage of resources, in spite of an extra £25m injected into the health service on Christmas eve by Mr Dorrell to avert a crisis.

Chris Smith, shadow Health Secretary, said the report made "chilling reading". And he added: "It shows that, whatever the claims made by the Government, the reality is a health service under massive pressure, beset by funding difficulties and slipping into crisis."

The BMA is seeking an urgent meeting with Mr Dorrell to discuss the findings of its national survey. The report showed: Nottingham – Queens Medical Centre: Doctors instructed to admit only urgent surgical cases and those who have been

waiting for 18 months for treatment, the limit under the Government's Patient's Charter. Wales: Four major hospitals closed to non-emergency cases because of the winter weather and flu epidemic.

South London: 34 patients waiting on trolleys in Accident and Emergency in the early morning, with no prospect of being admitted until the afternoon at the earliest.

East London: No elective surgery or routine work until after April 1997 outside the three Tower Hamlets hospitals (Homerton, Royal, and Newham) to improve financial viability of these three trusts by referring all cases to them.

Leeds: no more elective gynaecology work for next few months. Bed crises mean that beds in specialist units have to be borrowed for emergencies.

North Staffordshire Trust: A&E department – admissions and sickness forced a consultant to work without a break for 36 hours from Monday morning to 2 pm on Tuesday.

The cuts in elective treatments are also having a "major impact" on medical students in training. The chairman of the medical students committee started a three-week placement at Barts/Royal London to find paediatric A&E and other wards closed.

A BMA spokesman said: "We are taking it very seriously. Last October we warned that the light was at amber and if it got worse, it would be at red. The red lights are now on."

"People are waiting in ambulances because there are no beds. In Nottingham, the shortages are in crisis proportions. Letters have gone out virtually stopping everything."

"We are getting reports from in crisis in other parts of the country almost daily."

Gerry Malone, the Health Minister, said last night: "We anticipated the harsh winter and that is why we implemented a plan of action and provided additional money for extra services."

"It is nonsensical for the Labour Party to complain about funding when they won't match the Prime Minister's pledge of year on year increased spending on the NHS."



Blockade threat in Med's missile crisis

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

Turkey threatened yesterday to blockade Cyprus and even launch a military strike if the island's internationally recognised Greek Cypriot government went ahead with a widely criticised plan to deploy Russian anti-aircraft missiles.

"Those who play with fire have to take responsibility for their actions," said Turkey's Defence Minister, Turhan Tayan.

"We are strongly against these missiles going to the island. We will use all our capabilities to prevent it," he added.

The Cyprus government announced last weekend that it was buying the S-300 Russian surface-to-air missile system as a way of neutralising Turkey's long-held air superiority over the island.

The deal was immediately criticised by the United States and Britain as likely to inflame tensions on Cyprus, a former British colony that has been forcibly divided into Greek and Turkish sectors since 1974.

In the last few days, the mis-

sile crisis has blown up into Europe's most serious risk of international confrontation for many years. This has coincided with a separate Greek-Turkish row over the ownership of disputed islands in the Aegean Sea.

Mr Tayan compared the Cyprus crisis with events in Cuba in 1962, when the US blocked the island in response to the Soviet deployment of missiles there. But Turkey's state-run Anatolian news agency went further and suggested that the Turkish armed forces would launch a military strike against the missiles after Russia had delivered them.

Greek Cypriot officials last night tried to play down the crisis, saying there was no need for the deployment of the missiles, and that their purchase was intended primarily to refocus international attention on the need to solve the Cyprus dispute.

The island has been divided into a Greek Cypriot south and a Turkish-occupied north since 1974, when Turkish forces invaded Cyprus in response to a pro-Greek coup aimed at unit-

ing the island with Greece. Greece's Prime Minister, Costas Simitis, appeared unconcerned about the threats.

"Turkish aggression has been expressed for some time. We would be playing Turkey's game if we showed particular worry over this and were swept into an atmosphere of crisis," he said.

Prospects for cooling the situation depend heavily on a sensible US diplomat, Carey Cavanaugh, who is to visit Cyprus. Greece and Turkey's forces would launch a military strike against the missiles after Russia had delivered them.

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There are many reasons to buy education: now we know you can buy exam grades**Judith Judd**
Education Editor

Parents choose to buy education for their children for many reasons. Sometimes it is family tradition, smaller classes and more individual tuition; perhaps there is an element of social cachet or snobbery.

They hope their children will also get better examination results, and yesterday came evidence that indeed they do – even if they don't deserve them.

A report from government exam advisers found that A-level English examiners awarded candidates from top fee-paying schools higher grades than they deserved. Its findings mean that some of the 5,000 candi-

dates involved, almost all from fee-paying schools, may have secured university places which would otherwise have gone to comprehensive school pupils, Dr Nick Tate, the authority's chief executive, admitted.

Dr Tate said the examiners in this case made a number of changes, which might amount to as much as two grades, without even looking at the scripts. Instead, they relied on teacher predictions, knowledge of the schools and of individual examiners. He said: "The way the exam process was conducted was unworthy of a reputable examining board."

Overall, 60,000 candidates took A-level English. The report reveals that some of those entered with the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Exam Board last summer had their marks in-

creased, not on the basis of what they had written, but because of the grade predictions made by their teachers. Exam boards use predictions to help sort out big discrepancies in marks.

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There is no evidence of collusion between the schools and the board but there is evidence of overgenerosity. Teachers'

grade predictions are a bit of information to be taken into account but they should not be the main factor.

The upgrading took place at the end of the exam process. In virtually all cases, the report says, the upgrading was unjustified. "In one instance the marks given to a candidate who had produced extremely brief responses had been changed from 14 out of 60 to 40 out of 60 with no apparent justification."

The board's chief examiner in English, Dr John Saunders, who headed an 11-strong team, resigned last July. He said he was protesting against the imposition of new marking rules which penalised gifted candidates.

Last night, he said: "The no-

tion that we are going to give Eton everything we want is completely untrue."

This report is a slur on people of high integrity and professional experience. There was no upgrading of candidates on the basis of teachers' predictions alone."

A spokesman for the Independent Schools Information Service said: "There's no evidence of partiality to independent school candidates. The fact that the majority of candidates taking this syllabus were from independent schools is an historical accident."

The board, which has merged with another and is now the Oxford and Cambridge Examinations and Assessment Council,

said a new team of senior examiners had been appointed for English and measures put in place to prevent a repetition of last summer's events.

Dr Tate has asked the board to ensure that similar problems are not occurring in other subjects. The authority scrutinises about 10 per cent of exam syllabuses each year.

John Dunford, former president of the Secondary Heads Association and head of Durham Johnston School in Durham, said: "I am appalled that my students may have been put at a disadvantage by this process. Candidates from one sector have been given an advantage in the competitive world of university admissions."



At ease: The Prince of Wales talking to Leading Wren Paula Trewin of HMS Illustrious on his visit to Portsmouth yesterday when he presented the Wilkinson Sword of Peace to the captains of two Royal Navy ships, the Illustrious and HMS Invincible

significant shorts**Boy, 15, falls through ice and dies**

Burned-out Mirren wants to quit

A teenage boy died yesterday after falling through ice on a pond. Peter Sinclair, 15, of Stevenson, Ayrshire, and his next-door-neighbour, John Wales, 13, had been trying to retrieve golf balls at Auchentharvie golf course when Peter ventured out on to the ice and fell through.

Six pensioners who were golfing shouted at him to try and swim to an island but as he tried to clamber back on to the ice, he slipped back in and disappeared.

Firefighters were swiftly on the scene and one who went to save the boy said he probably slipped to his death less than a minute before they arrived. Charles Bell, dressed only in standard fire-fighting kit, waded up to his neck but failed to find him. His body was retrieved later.

Plan to tempt tired heads

Burnt-out head teachers who seek early retirement could be encouraged to return to teaching until they reach 60 under proposals from their local authority employers.

The move would allow heads who no longer wanted the pressure of running a school the chance to stay on at work under less stressful conditions while also saving on pensions payments, the Local Government Education Employers said yesterday.

The suggestion is part of a package of measures aimed at cutting the growing bill for teachers' pensions. In exchange for accepting some concessions, the authorities want Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, to delay the introduction of new pensions rules from Easter until next September, though that is considered unlikely. There are fears that there will be an exodus of older staff before the deadline. Lucy Ward

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Tonsil test for CJD

Doctors may be able to make an early diagnosis of the new strain of the brain disorder Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (CJD) by examining tonsil tissue, using a new test devised by British scientists.

The "new variant" of CJD, which is thought to be caused by eating food contaminated with BSE, or mad cow disease, has so far affected 15 people in the UK.

Previously, the diagnosis has had to be made after death or by a brain biopsy, which is expensive and can be dangerous to the patient.

The new test, reported in the *Lancet*, follows work by John Collinge at St Mary's Medical School in London and the CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh. Charles Arthur**Child hangs**

A 12-year-old boy died after being found hanging at his home, an inquest was told yesterday. David Tuck of Upton St Leonards, near Gloucester, was taken to hospital, but attempts to revive him failed. The inquest was adjourned.

Snake squad

Blackadder, the television anti-hero played by Rowan Atkinson, was adopted by the Army's Combat Service Support Group. Every soldier in it will wear "a wriggle black adder".

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**Whitehall accused of sabotaging openness****Colin Brown**
Chief Political Correspondent

New civil service codes of conduct for the release of public information were attacked as "too restrictive" yesterday by the Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI) as further evidence of the way that Whitehall is breaking the spirit of the Prime Minister's drive to make Government more open.

The codes will make it more difficult for the Ombudsman to investigate in environmental cases, including the high charges for information relating to the BSE "mad cow" disease, and a total blanket has been thrown over information relating to MI5.

A member of the public was told he would have to pay over £6,000 under John Major's

Open Government proposals if he insisted in demanding information about the handling of "mad cow" disease by renderers and incinerators.

The high price of information was seen last night by the Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI) as further evidence of the way that Whitehall is breaking the spirit of the Prime Minister's drive to make Government more open.

The Ministry of Agriculture told Alan Watson, from Gower, South Wales, that the information would cost £1,293. But the ministry might have to seek legal advice, which could push up the cost by £5,195.

When Mr Watson, a civil en-

gineer, complained to CFOI in London, they took up his case with the ombudsman, who has now issued a new code of practice issued yesterday by Roger Freeman, the Cabinet minister with responsibility for the civil service, has made it worse.

Maurice Frankel, director of the CFOI, said: "Until now, the ombudsman could ask for information covered by the code of practice and he would be able to challenge it. But under the new code, that remedy has been removed."

The Government presented the codes as a modest tidying up measure, but the CFOI believes that in the small print, they have tightened up the restrictions.

Dead husband is to father twins

As a woman is fertilised by her late partner's sperm, experts say the law is confused, writes Liz Hunt

to the Court of Appeal on Monday. Mrs Blood, 31, whose husband slipped into a coma and died of meningitis before giving written permission for his sperm to be used, is challenging a ruling by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) – subsequently upheld by the High Court – not to let her have fertility treatment here or abroad.

The use of posthumous frozen sperm after cancer treatment is well-established, but success rates are low. Scientists say that a treatment, known as ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection), in which sperm is injected directly into the egg, offers a far greater chance of a viable pregnancy in these cases.

The case, reported in the *British Medical Journal*, comes as Diane Blood, whose battle to have her dead husband's child has won widespread support of doctors and the public, announced she will take her case

to the Court of Appeal on Monday. Mrs Blood, 31, whose husband slipped into a coma and died of meningitis before giving written permission for his sperm to be used, is challenging a ruling by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) – subsequently upheld by the High Court – not to let her have fertility treatment here or abroad.

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He writes: "It seems to me that this is a case in which the distress and hardship to an individual are glaringly obvious, and the value to society minimal. That view presupposes that legal and ethical principles are contingent, and not absolutes that need to be defended at whatever cost to actual living people."

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'Thank God... it's a miracle'

Shipwrecked Briton was losing hope of rescue

THE RESCUE

Ian Burrell

It was the thud of an Australian fist on the carbon hull of Tony Bullimore's overturned yacht that told him he was not going to die.

The British yachtsman had spent four days and four nights in an air-pocket inside his capsized yacht, praying that he would be saved. "I started shouting 'I'm coming, I'm coming, coming,'" he said. "It took a few seconds to get from one end of the boat to the other. Then I took a few deep breaths and I dived out of the boat."

It was the culmination of one of the most dramatic sea rescues of all time - and a heroic survival in a cabin perched on boxes with "a little chocolate and a little water" and three feet of seawater lapping around him.

The Briton had been stranded in one of the most treacherous parts of the world, more than 1,500 miles from the Australian coast and 900 miles from Antarctica.

The conditions in which he had existed were the stuff of

It was heaven. I really never thought I would reach that far'

nightmares - solitude, pitch darkness, and absolute silence save for the sound of the icy waters sloshing at his feet.

Tossed around by giant waves, he nibbled pieces of chocolate and took breaths from a diminishing air supply.

When Bullimore emerged into daylight early yesterday morning, the moment was almost spiritual. "It was heaven, absolute heaven," he said. "I really, really never thought I would reach that far. I was starting to look back over my life and was thinking, 'Well, I've had a good life, I've done most of the things I had wanted to'."

"If I was picking words to describe it, it would be a miracle, an absolute miracle."

Bullimore said he felt he had been "born all over again" and as he began his new life yesterday, heading back to land on board the Australian frigate HMAS *Adelaide*, he had plenty of opportunity to thank those who had saved him. *Adelaide*'s skipper Captain Raydon Gates said the rescued sailor's first words had been "Thank God" and "It's a miracle".

The Australian rescue team was first alerted to the Briton's plight on Sunday, when a satellite distress signal was picked up



'This chap is not ordinary like you or me'

THE SURVIVAL

The key to Tony Bullimore's incredible feat of endurance was an ability to remain calm and methodical in his thinking despite the most appalling circumstances, writes Ian Burrell.

Trapped in darkness, with freezing waters lapping at his feet and buffeted by 60ft waves, he will have known only too well that he was more than 1,000 miles from the nearest land.

Faced with the danger of being dragged down with the boat, and the terrifying sounds of the yacht's fittings coming loose and crashing down, most people would have been tempted to try and jump clear.

Mr Bullimore's sense of calm developed from years of solo

of the hull, in fact really at the top, where one of the windows had come out, and it caused a vacuum.

"The hole caused water to be sucked in and out at a colossal rate, causing a kind of Niagara Falls, but upside down.

"I had to find myself a spot as high up as possible and put nets around it so that I could crawl in there and lash myself in to get out of the water and what

"There's nothing he would have been able to look at outside, so the movement he sensed would not be matched with visual stimulus. This is a classic situation that makes people motion sick."

Yet even the discomfort of sea-sickness while drawing breath from a few feet of air between the water level and what

was once the bottom of the boat, could not break Mr Bullimore's remarkable tenacity and spirit.

"This chap is not an ordinary person, like you or me," said a clinical psychologist, Eileen Kennedy, from the Centre for Crisis Psychology in Skipton, North Yorkshire.

"The kind of person who takes part in a solo yacht race like this is going to be someone very sure of their own skills and experience and who lives a bit

on the edge - someone who welcomes challenge and risk."

The yachtsman said that during the "horrible, traumatic experience" he was "hanging on in there and believing something would happen and just fighting."

Through four days of darkness and solitude, he depended on "sheer determination, a little water, a little chocolate" to sustain him.

Fellow solo yachtsmen, like

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, who described Mr Bullimore as a "tough little bugger", were confident that he would survive.

But even Mr Bullimore was at his endurance limit.

"I only just made it because of weather conditions. I was deteriorating at a reasonable rate," he said. "When I knew that the rescue was actually going to happen, I cannot explain it. I feel ecstatic. I thought it would never happen."

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Round-the-world organisers plan to tighten safety rules for competitors

Stuart Alexander

The Australian government has asked for assurances from the organisers of the gruelling round-the-world races that there will be no need for another rescue mission on the scale of the one that ended yesterday.

While the general consensus is that the Australian Navy and Airforce have had both invaluable exercise experience and a huge public-relations bonus, the cost of the operation has been considerable.

The British organisers of the Whitbread Round-the-world race, which starts from Southampton, Hampshire next September, have been approached and the race director, Ian Bailey-Willmott, was anxious yesterday to assure the Australians and the rest of the world that stringent safety regulations would be imposed on competitors.

The Whitbread race is a series of sprints keeping the boats much closer to the main

THE RACES

land of Australia and away from the hostile southern waters around Antarctica. "While nobody can guarantee that anyone going to sea will not need rescuing, we take our safety responsibilities extremely seriously," Mr Bailey-Willmott said. "So far, there has never been one occasion when a Whitbread competitor was rescued by anyone other than another Whitbread competitor."

He also pointed out that his race organisation goes back to 1973 and has enjoyed a high level of continuity, a high level of Royal Navy input, and consultation with other expert bodies for more than 20 years.

Alan Green, race director of the Royal Ocean Racing Club, which is a partner with Whitbread in the race, said three things helped Tony Bullimore and others who capsized during the Vendée Globe race: satel-

lite beacons, which helped to pinpoint their positions accurately; water-tight compartments in boats, and the protective survival clothes worn by the competitors.

The Open 60 class of yachts which compete in the Vendée Globe - which was begun in 1989 by Philippe Jeantot and is still organised by him - are of widely differing design and the RORC's chief measurer, John Warren, yesterday pointed to the very broad-beamed hulls which have been developed as the possible problem in the boats' self-righting capacity. In Bullimore's case, where the keel had been broken off and the vessel lost stability, little could be done to right the yacht as the inverted mast and sail acted as a resistant keel.

Boat builders are seeking the perfect balance between strength and speed. Construction standards will be carefully examined when all of those rescued in the Vendée Globe race have written their reports.

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news

The Rikki Neave inquiry: Family and union demand public investigation after consultancy's study is condemned as superficial

Catalogue of errors that led to death

Glenda Cooper

Rikki Neave was "failed" by Cambridgeshire social services, a damning report found yesterday, prompting fresh calls for a public inquiry into his case.

Six-year-old Rikki was found strangled on the Welland estate in Peterborough in November 1994, following years of abuse by his mother, Ruth. She was found not guilty of his murder last November but failed for seven years for cruelty to him and her two daughters.

Rikki's family, who were not consulted over the independent report by the Bridge child-care consultancy, said they would be writing to the junior health minister Simon Burns, urging a more wide-ranging investigation.

And Unison, which represents social workers, said the report was "nowhere near" the thorough, independent inquiry that Cambridgeshire County Council had promised. Yesterday a third social services worker involved in Rikki's care was suspended.

The report found blunders over missing files, lack of communication and confusion as to whether Rikki was on the at-risk register.

While social workers repeatedly found Ruth Neave aggressive, threatening and hostile, the inquiry noted that "it does not appear that the question was ever addressed about how the children experienced her care".

Staff also failed to take into account what the children said. When



Rikki Neave, who was found dead in 1994, and his mother, Ruth

they did perceive that there was a problem all too often prevention methods were incomplete.

And although his name was placed on the Child Protection Register there was no evidence of any comprehensive assessment. The missing files were investigated by police and the files that did remain were sparse and rarely read.

The 29 recommendations included the need to seek children's views; the establishment of a risk policy; support for social workers where a parent is aggressive; and a new formula for allocating resources for child protection.

Janet Lindsay-German, one of the report's authors, said: "Social workers, their managers and the department failed to recognise what was going on for Rikki at home ... One of the most important things for us is that lessons that have been outlined time after time after time are still not being practised."

The chief executive of Cambridgeshire council, Gordon Lister, acknowledged the "quality of services provided for Rikki Neave ... fell below acceptable levels".

But Mr Lister said he did not anticipate any further suspensions and made clear he would not consider resigning. Challenged that frontline social workers had been scapegoated he replied: "The buck stops right at the top in this case."

But Rikki's family - including his father, Trevor Harvey, and his grandparents, Maurice and Doris Harvey - later said: "Most of the recommendations ... merely suggest that the local authority should comply more fully with the child care protection regulations."

"We now find it necessary to write to the Simon Burns ... to invite him to consider a formal public inquiry so that the wider issues can be properly investigated."



The report's author Janet Lindsay-German and county social services chief Ted Unswoth in Cambridge yesterday. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

The boy who was left out in the cold

Glenda Cooper

At three years old, Rikki Neave was already being turned out of his house at midnight, in his pyjamas, barefoot, and left to cry until social services were called. Neighbours told of his mother, Ruth, dangling him screaming over a bridge by his legs, writing "idiot" in green felt-tip pen on his forehead, and squirting washing-up liquid in his mouth.

Before his body was found, strangled, in a copper near his home in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, two years ago, Rikki's six-year life was marked by repeated acts of cruelty by his mother.

At a trial last autumn, she was found not guilty of his murder but was sentenced to seven years for the "appalling ill-treatment and neglect" she had shown to Rikki and her daughter, which caused the judge, Mr Justice Popplewell, to say he had "rarely come across a case of such persistent and systematic cruelty to young children".

The trial also raised questions about the failure of social services to deal with the family.

Ruth Neave's problems were well known. She had shown signs of being disturbed from an early age, and had been in and out of foster homes since the age of two, rejected by her parents, who killed themselves in a suicide pact when she was 24.

Addiction to amphetamines further destabilised her and she became increasingly preoccupied with the occult.

It was an unstable atmosphere for any child. Described by neighbours as a "little bugger" and a "real hardknock", Rikki had seen father figures come and go. He and his step-father, Dean Neave, with whom his mother was besotted, hated each other, and Rikki became the butt of much of Ruth Neave's cruelty. She kicked her son "like a football", picked him up by the throat, punched him and sent him out at night to fetch drugs.

In a series of letters to Dean, Ruth Neave wrote: "I have hurt [Rikki] with a match ... I have punched his little face in. I just want to kill him ... but I cannot."

Neave's everyday actions should have proved more worrying to social services. But the Peterborough East team which covered the Welland estate, with its high unemployment and many single-parent households, was said by insiders to be "close to collapse" in the months before Rikki died. Morale was low as staff complained of huge workloads, many of them handling 15 cases at a time.

"They felt overworked and under-resourced and were going from day to day by the seat of their pants," said one council official. "No one ever got hold of it."

Children caught in poverty trap

Michael Streeter

Children are suffering the most from the growing gap between rich and poor in Britain which is helping to make the role of social workers almost impossible, according to a leading academic.

Professor Jane Lewis, a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, claims the growth in child poverty is so serious it means Britain will have difficulty implementing Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This concerns the "right of children to a standard of living adequate for children's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development".

Professor Lewis, director of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, and writing in *Community Care* magazine on the day that the Rikki Neave report was published, says social workers were having to pick up the pieces from other parts of the welfare state.

She said that the rising number of children excluded from school and the greater number of sick people cared for by social services rather than by the medical profession meant social services were "very much the

end of the line". Social work was always difficult in a liberal democracy, when social controls conflict with personal freedoms, writes Professor Lewis, "but in such a profoundly unequal society their role becomes the well-nigh impossible one of containment".

She adds: "More oppressive poverty means social problems will be manifested in more worrying ways."

Professor Lewis also attacks politicians for failing to tackle social problems affecting children. She says: "The statistics on child poverty have been reasonably well-publicised, as have been the shocking outcomes for a high percentage of children in care. But there is no sign of any political party fully wholeheartedly embracing the language of investment in children. Calls for containment and control are much more prevalent."

In her wide-ranging article on the state of community care, Professor Lewis calls for a change in tone and content of debate, to re-invent the language of "trust, mutual aid, co-operation and citizenship" against the current tone of consumerism and private responsibility.

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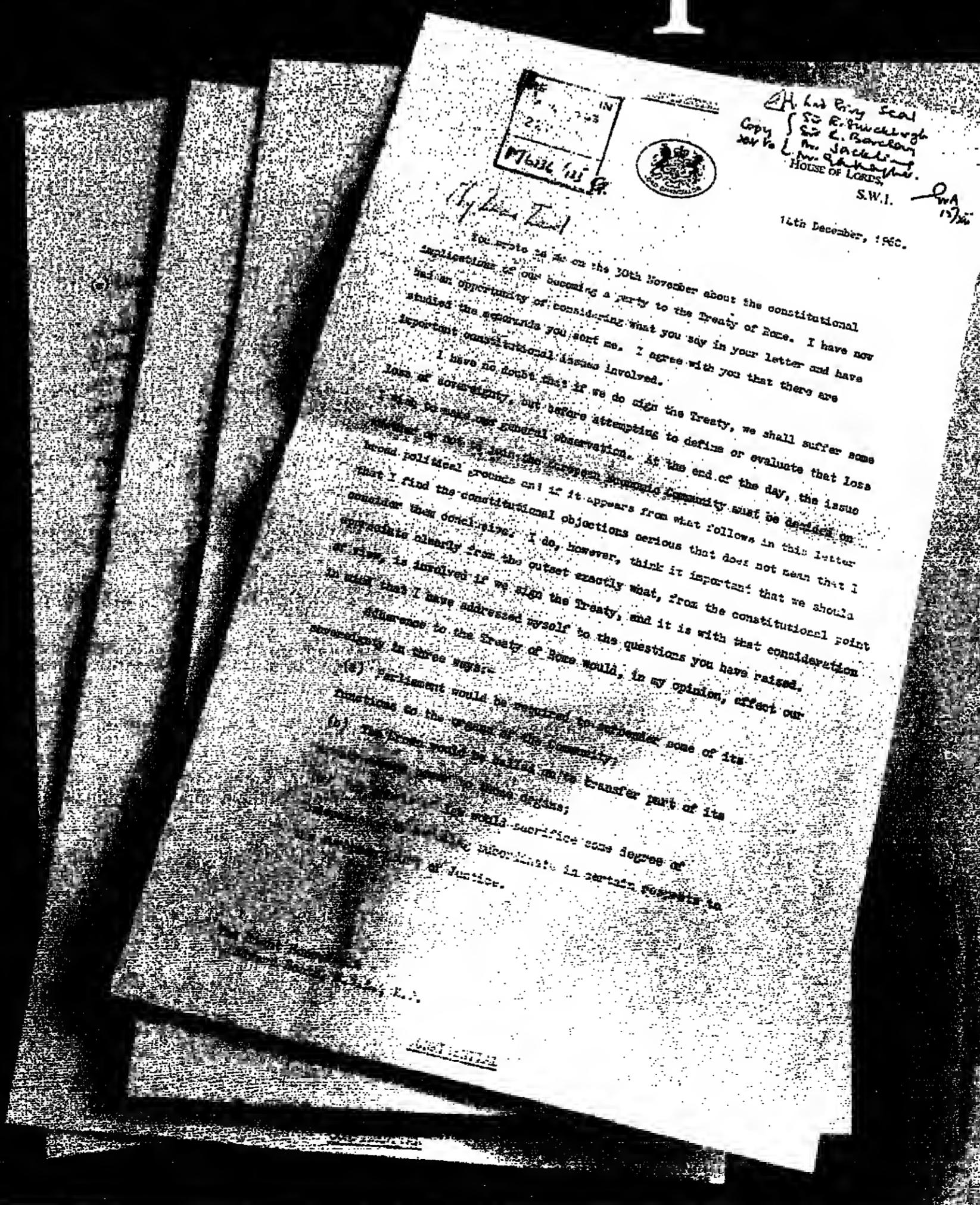
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Police in the dark on Colorado child murder

Tim Cormwell
Boulder

Two weeks after six-year-old JonBenét Ramsey was found strangled and bludgeoned to death in the cellar of her house, residents of this quiet Colorado university town waited to hear the first statement from their police chief on what is rapidly becoming America's latest celebrity murder.

Tom Koby was due to meet five local reporters for a discussion to be broadcast on Boulder's municipal cable network last night. His police department, which has released virtually no information on its investigation, has so far pointed to no suspects or even tangible leads in the death of the child beauty queen.

Home videos of JonBenét – pronounced Shaumberay – sauntering down catwalks, pre-

cociously belting out patriotic songs – have seared the image of the dead child into the American public mind.

Early on Boxing Day morning, Boulder police were called to the home of John Ramsey, founder of a billion-dollar high technology company. His wife, Patsy, a former Miss West Virginia, told of finding a neatly written three-page ransom note that said: "We have your daughter and demanding the strange sum of \$118,000. For eight hours, it is now reported, police waited for the kidnappers to call while a local bank provided the cash. In what was a highly unusual procedure, they then asked Mr Ramsey to search his house for anything unusual. He found his daughter's body in the wine cellar, her mouth sealed with duct tape, a card around her neck, her skull fractured, and reportedly sexually

assaulted. Since the murder, the Boulder police department has responded to a full-scale invasion by the national press with almost total silence.

Dubs and drabs of information, however, have tended to point the finger of suspicion at the family. Only the couple and their nine-year-old son were reported to be in the house that night, although Mr Ramsey's two grown children from a previous marriage had visited on Christmas Day. There was no apparent sign of a forced entry.

The bizarre circumstances of her death have brought comparisons to the case of Susan Smith, the South Carolina mother who confessed to drowning her two picture perfect children – also captured on family videos – after claiming they were kidnapped by a carjacker.

Mr and Mrs Ramsey have both hired lawyers and a media adviser. They made a single tearful appearance on CNN, but have not so far agreed to be formally interviewed by police. When Mrs Ramsey warned of a "killer on the loose", city officials went out of their way to say there was no danger to the public.

The ransom note – and part of a "practice" note where the author apparently tried to change his or her handwriting – were matched to a pad found in the house, according to local newspaper reports.

But family friends have noted that with the Ramseys having spent a reported half a million dollars extending the house, numerous workmen had access. Others have suggested that a disgruntled employee of Mr Ramsey, might have been behind a kidnap attempt.

A new lord takes giant strides up Capitol Hill

Washington — The United States has no post of leader of the opposition. But if it did, then there is scant argument over who would fill it. Not Bob Dole of course, vanquished by Bill Clinton in November and now septuagenarian superstar of the late-night comedy circuit and certainly not the chastened 1997 model Newt Gingrich, humbled by ethical lapses despite the distinction of being the first Republican since the Depression era to win consecutive terms as Speaker. Instead, step forward Trent Lott, Trent who? The 105th Congress which opened this week should soon dispel any lingering ignorance.

As Senate majority leader, the job he took over from Mr Dole, Trent Lott is lord of Capitol Hill and the most powerful Republican voice in the land. He will be his party's chief negotiator with the President and prime shaper of the Senate's business. Bipartisanship is the catchphrase of the hour. Whether word is transformed into deed depends on him, at least as much as Mr Clinton. And that for the omens are good.

When he defeated his fellow Mississippian Thad Cochran to become Majority Leader last June Lott was expected to be far more confrontational than the pragmatic and non-ideological Mr Dole. Was he not a former Democrat with the special fire of the converted, an obdurate who in his first term as a Congressman in 1974 was one of the very few to reject impeachment of Richard Nixon until almost the very end? But things have not worked out like that.

In one way certainly, Trent Lott is an emblem of his times, and the extraordinary grip of Dixie on the pinnacles of American politics. An Arkansan told the White House, a Tennessean the vice-Presidency; the Speaker is a Georgian, and the House Majority Leader a Texan. And now another Deep Southerner at the helm of the

Trent Lott, the new Senate majority leader, is a man made to mediate, writes Rupert Cornwell

Senate. The rest though is paradox.

Lott may be an unabashed conservative, opposed to abortion, gun control and strong supporter of a balanced budget amendment and a reduced role for Government. But he is also a mediator who seems, oddly, to have learnt that still much as Bill Clinton did, as a boy forced to intercede to keep the peace between his mother and an often drunken father (the couple would later divorce).

He is calculating and openly ambitious never more so than when he successfully ran for the second ranking post of Republican Whip in 1994, after just one term in the Senate. But Lott is also gregarious and widely liked. He can sport a Southern drawl befitting one who grew up in Pascagoula on Mississippi's Gulf Coast – but can talk faster than a Brooklyn car salesman and dresses like a duke.

Above all, colleagues say, he is an organiser and an operator, scarcely less skilled at building legislative coalitions than Dole himself in short a compromiser, as he must be in an institution of 100 individuals of whom a true majority is not the arithmetical 51, nor the present Republican strength of 55, but the 60 votes required to cut off a filibuster. Managing a body each of whose members are wont to look into a mirror and see a future President has been likened to herding cats or – to use Lott's preferred metaphor – "putting bulldogs in a wheelbarrow".

And he might be forgiven some delusions of his own. His relative youth (Lott is only 35), the eminence of his job and his smoothness in front of the cameras virtually guarantees him a place on the list of potential Republican Presidential aspirants in 2000 or thereafter. For the moment though, in a system of divided government, most important is how he works with the present occupant of the White House, who is of course no mean operator himself. And the start has been promising. Buttressed by a reinvented moderate called Bill Clinton and the dealmaker Trent Lott, that famous "vital centre" might just prevail after all.



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international

Can a diplomat get away with murder?

A girl's death has fuelled the cries to end immunity, writes **David Usborne** in New York

A kerbside scuffle and a deadly car accident – two incidents in two cities in as many weeks – are triggering passionate debate in the United States about the behaviour of foreign diplomats living here and their use – or abuse – of the centuries-old claim of diplomatic immunity to duck legal retribution.

Grumbling about diplomats and their (lack of) regard for US laws is a favourite sport in New York and Washington DC, where most of them are posted. Nearly always it is about trivial fare – non-payment of parking tickets – but the refrain is clear: those dips are getting away with murder.

Even the common-or-garden infractions can occasionally escalate into front-page controversies. Such was the case after Christmas in New York, when two foreign officials, from the Russian and Belarus missions to the United Nations, were challenged by police after parking their car near a fire hydrant.

There is disagreement on what happened next. The diplomats say they were beaten by the officers, the officers say they were attacked by the diplomats. The Russian government complained: New York's Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, demanded the pair be ex-

pelled from his city and the country.

The New York affair – in which an indignant stalemate now prevails – has been eclipsed by the events of last Friday night on a busy street in Washington DC. A new Ford, hurtling at 80 miles an hour, slammed into the rear of a car stationary at traffic lights. The second car flew through the air and landed on a third, crushing and killing a passenger inside. She was 16-year-old Joviane Waltrick.

Getting away with murder is no longer metaphoric. Behind the wheel of the Ford – and, according to police, intoxicated – was Gueorgui Makharadze, number two at the Washington embassy of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. Prosecutors in Washington DC have said they would be ready to charge Mr Makharadze with negligent homicide – if only they could.

There seems little doubt the State Department will formally ask Georgia to waive the diplomatic immunity in Mr Makharadze's case. Few expect Georgia to acquiesce, however, in spite of a sympathetic letter of condolence sent by its president, Eduard Shevardnadze, to Joviane's grieving parents. America will be able to expel Mr Makharadze but nothing more.

Outrage over the case has spread to Capitol Hill, where the New Hampshire senator, Judd Gregg, has called on the White House to suspend the \$30m (£18m) in US aid sent annually to Georgia. David Richin, a lawyer for the dead girl's family, said: "This to me is murder, and there has to be some recourse."

For countries willing to waive immunity for one of their representatives abroad is extremely rare. Belgium allowed the shield of immunity to be lifted from a low-level embassy official who was convicted of killing two men in Miami. He is serving 25 years in a US jail.

But not so serious crime exactly rampant among diplomats posted in the US. Figures released by the State Department this week show that in a diplomatic corps that numbers 118,000 people (of which 18,000 enjoy immunity), less than one tenth of one per cent were involved in serious crime in 1995.

Petty abuse is endemic, however. In the New York case, it emerged that the car involved, from the Belarus mission, had been ticketed for traffic violations no less than 386 times in 1996: none had been paid. The 100-odd car fleet of the Russian mission, meanwhile, attracted an astonishing 14,437 tickets in six months of last year.



Red alert: A Chinese diplomat attacking police in London in August 1987. About 30 Chinese assaulted police after they parked a police car outside the Chinese Mission. The diplomats were barred from leaving the country without permission

Christopher Bellamy
The principle of diplomatic immunity was not formally established by international agreement until 1961 and rests on the principle of reciprocity: the main reason to treat other people's diplomats with respect is that if you do not your own are placed in jeopardy, writes Christopher Bellamy.

The aim is only to allow diplomats to carry out their functions with security and confidentiality, and also to recognise diplomats' function as representatives of their country. It does not grant them freedom to flout local law, although they may be immune to local jurisdiction to enforce such laws. Contrary to a widespread belief, a diplomatic mission is not "extra-territorial". It is, however, given the protection of inviolability within the receiving state. This rule refers to its premises and diplomatic dispatches. But all privileges and immunities are solely directed towards facilitating performance of diplomatic missions.



Double indemnity: The streets of west London are littered with illegally parked cars carrying diplomatic plates

Embassy staff feeling the long arm of British law

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

Diplomats in Britain who abuse their status by flouting the law with impunity are facing an increasingly tough response from the Foreign Office.

A clampdown was launched shortly after Libyan officials used diplomatic immunity to thwart an investigation into the 1984 murder of police constable Yvonne Fletcher, who was killed by a shot from the Libyan People's Bureau in London.

Until then diplomats openly abused the system, under which they are immune from prosecution by British law, notching up 22,337 unpaid parking tickets in 1986. That number fell to 1,586 in 1995. Among the worst parking culprits were the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Angola, and Nigeria.

Last year there were 34 serious offences, which included 18 drinking and driving cases and a number of thefts and shoplifting incidents.

There are about 2,500 people with diplomatic status in Britain and an additional 7,000 dependents, all of whom under the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1996 are exempt from British law.

But the Foreign Office has been placing increasing pressure on governments and ambassadors for their representatives to obey our laws and waive immunity in cases that are considered serious.

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "After the Yvonne Fletcher case we looked closely at the issue – we have taken a much tougher approach now."

Despite the crackdown, there has still been a series of high-profile cases in which diplomats have apparently used their status to escape justice.

When PC Fletcher was shot in 1984 outside the Libyan embassy, her killer was believed to be a diplomat inside. But he was never brought to justice.

James Ingley, an American lay preacher, was accused of a sex attack on a six-year-old girl in his care in 1987. His wife worked at the US Embassy in London and the charges were dropped.

In 1986 Indian envoy Babu Lal Gupta, who was accused of plotting to smuggle £320,000 worth of heroin into Britain, also escaped prosecution.

Cuba's ambassador Dr Oscar Fernandez-Mell was expelled in 1989 after one of his officials fired live bullets in a crowded London street, narrowly missing a bus.

And only last month Iris Ramirez-Paget, for five years the first secretary at the Honduras Embassy in London, fled Britain after being accused of secretly obtaining £36,000 in housing benefit and thousands of pounds in income support.

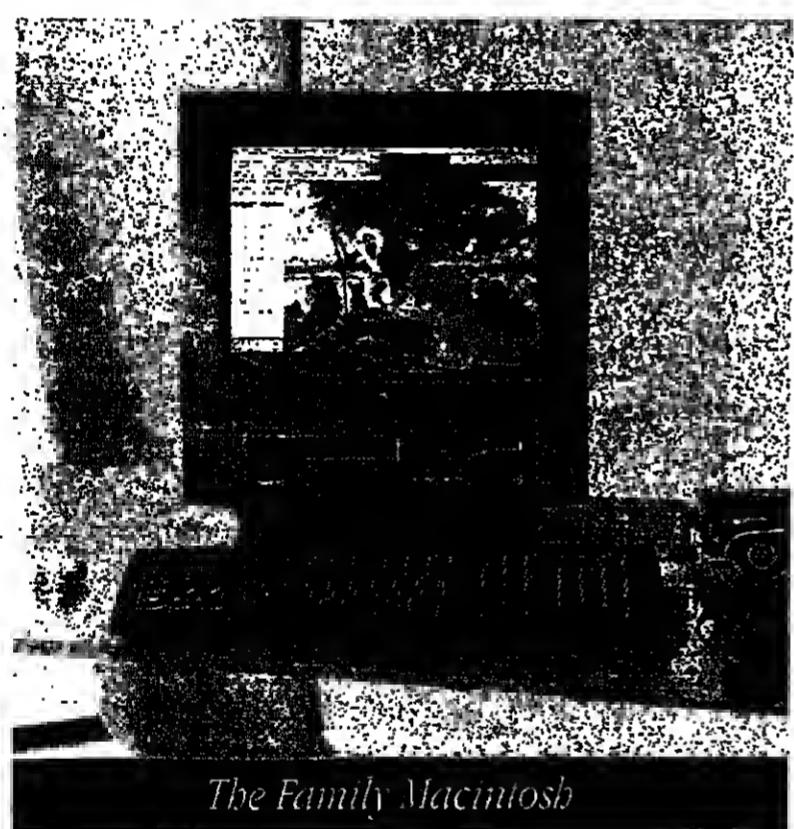
But the number of offences has been dropping and evidence of the tougher line was provided last July when a Zimbabwean diplomat who twice claimed immunity after driving under the influence of alcohol in London was recalled. The Zimbabwe Foreign Affairs Ministry summoned back Charles Matengemba, 33, the First Secretary at its High Commission in the Strand.

ler?

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Stars attack Germany's stance on Scientology



Dustin Hoffman: Compared today's 'persecution' to 1930s

Imre Karacs

Bonn

Hollywood's finest have risen against German oppression, striking a blow for a well-heeled but persecuted minority. In an "open letter" addressed to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, cunningly disguised as a full-page advert in yesterday's *International Herald Tribune*, Dustin Hoffman, Goldie Hawn and company accuse the German government of Nazi-style repression of Scientologists.

"You may feel that, as non-Germans, this is none of our

business," write the 34 celebrities, none of whom belongs to the Church of Scientology. "But... when a modern nation demonstrates its unwillingness to protect the basic rights of a group of its citizens, and indeed, exhibits a willingness to condone and participate in their persecution, right-thinking people in other countries must speak out. Extremists of your party should not be permitted to believe that the rest of the world will look the other way. Not this time."

The stars, who also include film director Oliver Stone and

novelists Mario Puzo and Gore Vidal, complain that members of Scientologists are banned from German political parties, excluded from jobs in public service, and their children are expelled from schools. "And - like the book burning of the 1930s - your party has organised boycotts and seeks to ban performances of Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Chick Corea and any other artists who believe in Scientology.

In the Germany of the 1930s, Hitler made religious intolerance official government policy," the letter stated. "Jews were first marginalised, then excluded

from many activities, then vilified and ultimately subjected to unspeakable horrors." It added: "In the 1930s, it was the Jews. Today it is the Scientologists." A spokesman for the *International Herald Tribune* in Paris said the advertisement was placed by Bertram Fields, a Los Angeles entertainment attorney who also signed the letter.

There is an element of truth in the charge, but they are not entirely accurate. The "boycot" of Tom Cruise consisted of a group of young Christian Democrats distributing leaflets outside cinemas showing his lat-

est film, *Mission: Impossible*. Chick Corea was prevented from performing at a publicly-funded concert because he was a Scientologist.

All parties, however, support moves to curb the activities of a group they do not accept as founded on religious principles, and a ban on Scientologists in public services has been enacted in some conservative Länder. Mr Kohl's government is now trying to extend that nationwide. Authorities also agreed to consider putting Scientology under surveillance by the anti-extremist Office for

the Protection of the Constitution. Many other countries, including Britain, have taken steps to curtail the Church of Scientology.

Heber Jentsch, president of the Church of Scientology International, said in a statement released in London that he hoped "Chancellor Kohl heeds their admonition to restore democratic principles in his country". The Chancellor himself was not prepared to respond to the criticism, however. "They don't know anything about Germany and they don't want to either," Mr Kohl said. "Otherwise

they wouldn't have talked such rubbish."

Ignorance cuts both ways. Mr Kohl admitted he had not seen the letter, and asked if he planned to respond, he said: "No, I do not have any intention whatsoever of reacting. I haven't read the names of those who signed this thing." He was supported by Rudolf Schapring, parliamentary leader of the opposition Social Democrats. "This letter is unacceptable, if only because of the scandalous comparison between today's Germany and Hitler's fascism," he told the newspaper *Bild*.

Taliban threat forces uneasy pact

Russia has asked for Britain's help over the Afghan crisis. Christopher Bellamy reports

The continued success of the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan has brought about a bizarre rerun of the 19th-century "Great Game", when British and Russian diplomats engaged in cloak-and-dagger operations to establish influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia in the face of a Russian threat to invade the British Raj in India.

But in the new game, the players are rather different. Russia has quietly asked Britain for help, and the two former imperial adversaries find themselves arrayed with France, Iran and other former Soviet republics against Britain's ally the United States.

In recent weeks, the Taliban - "seekers of religious knowledge" - who seized Kabul in the autumn have continued to drive back the Jamiat-i-Islami faction led by the military commander, General Ahmed Shah Massoud.

The Taliban have continued to make gains north of Kabul,

Alone among great powers, the US supports the Taliban

near the entrance to the key Panjshir valley, the scene of much fighting during the Soviet Union's 10-year Afghan war, which leads north-east to Tajikistan. Fighting has recently taken place around Bagram airbase, north of the capital.

The *Independent* has learned that Russia has hinted to Britain that it wants more help against the Taliban and in support of General Massoud's troops. This is consistent with Russian noises about concern for their "near abroad" and requests for Nato help in dealing with Central Asian instability.

The Jamiat-i-Islami gains its support mainly from the Farsi (Persian)-speaking ethnic group in Afghanistan and has supporters in Russia, Iran and India. All these countries support General Massoud against the extreme Sunni Taliban, who are mostly ethnic Pathans. So do Britain and France, which are both concerned about Islamic fundamentalism.

Iran is unhappy about the presence of the Taliban just across its border. The Sunni Taliban movement's strong sentiments against the Shia and Pathan domination of a largely Persian-speaking area of Afghanistan, are both most un-

welcome to Iran. Neighbouring Uzbekistan is uneasy about Islamic fundamentalists, particularly Pathans, so close to its borders. Tajikistan fears that fundamentalist influences might reinforce Islamic insurgents in its territory, and Russia fears they might spread in Russia, too.

On 4 October last year, Russia called a conference of the CIS to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, which is adding to its concerns about security in the former Soviet Union - the "near abroad". By the end of last year, Russia was openly asking Nato for help in improving security in central Asia.

Pakistan, which has given some encouragement and support to the Taliban, also has its concerns. It is worried that the Taliban may revive demands for an independent Pathan state (Pushtumistan) which would incorporate an extensive belt of Pakistani territory.

The Pakistan government also worries about a spill-over of militant Islam from Afghanistan, which is already happening - the Taliban have received training and weaponry from extreme Islamic groups in Pakistan.

However, alone among the great powers, the United States has been supporting the Taliban - because of its historic antipathy towards both Russia and Iran. Diplomatic sources said they found the US attitude rather naive, but there was no doubt of its direction.

That has brought about the unlikely and unwelcome prospect of British and French weaponry and advisers on General Massoud's side clashing with US advisers and matériel on the Taliban side.

The Foreign Office said yesterday that it remained committed to the current arms embargo prohibiting supplies to Afghanistan and that Britain's main concern was to maintain the Overseas Development Administration's aid project in Afghanistan which the Taliban regime has hindered.

Diplomatic sources said they were very concerned about the repression of women and the implementation of their interpretation of Islamic sharia law, but had refused to comment on suggestions that Britain was playing a more active role, and stressed that British diplomats in the region would meet representatives of any of the warring factions. However, other sources say that other options are also being canvassed.

Afghanistan is already awash with weapons, mostly inherited from the 10-year Soviet war. The Taliban have also acquired US weapons via Pakistan.



Hands off: John Bull warding off trespassers at the Afghan border, as represented by *Punch* in 1885. In the 19th century, Britain and Russia engaged in cloak-and-dagger operations to establish influence in Afghanistan in the face of a threat to invade British India. Photograph: Mary Evans Picture Library

However, the Taliban have

edged into it.

It is partly oil and gas that has led to a revival of British interest. British Gas and BP are both involved in extracting gas and oil from Central Asia. British Gas is involved in a joint venture with Agip, an Italian company, and the Kazakhstan government to exploit a huge field at Karchagan in Kazakhstan. BP is involved in joint ventures in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to extract petroleum from the Caspian Sea. This has meant that there is considerable

concern in London over the stability of Central Asia, and a desire to assist Russia in maintaining it.

There are only two small gas distribution pipes running from Uzbekistan into Afghanistan, which date back to the days when Afghanistan was no more than a client regime of the Soviet Union. Until a stable and politically acceptable regime is established, Afghanistan is only of interest as a route to get relatively small quantities of oil and gas to Pakistan.

TURKMENISTAN
ASHKABAD
AFGHANISTAN
KABUL
PAKISTAN
ISTANBUL
CHINA
DUSHANBE
KASHGAR VALLEY
TURKMENISTAN
KYZYLSTAN
KAZAKHSTAN
URAL
INDIA
200 miles

Map features:
 Taliban
 Russia (Massoud)
 Britain (Dostum formerly communist)

On Saturday, January 11 the Financial Times launches its annual 'Lunch for a Fiver' offer. From Monday to Friday for the next two weeks you can enjoy a two course lunch from as little as £5.

There are 400 restaurants all over the country taking part with either £5, £7.50 or £10 menus.

All you have to do is buy the FT this Saturday for a full list of participating restaurants. Then make a reservation stating the FT 'Lunch for a Fiver' offer, January 13 to January 24. Two weeks when you simply must do lunch.

No FT, no commen...

Must do lunch.

'Lunch for a Fiver' with the FT.



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couldn't have talked such
brutal cuts both ways. Mr
admitted he had not seen
it, and asked if he
had to respond, he said:
I do not have any intention
whatever of recusing. I
read the names of those
signed this thing." He was
urged by Rudolf Schäping,
secretary leader of the op-
position Social Democrats
letter is unacceptable, if
because of the scandalous
parison between today's
newspaper and Hitler's fasci-
nist newspaper *Bild*.

Two bombs injure 10 in Tel Aviv

Trick Cockburn

USA/EM

Ten bombs injured ten people,

of them seriously, in a

series of attacks in Tel Aviv

in what may be the re-
umption of a Palestinian

bombing campaign.

The bomb, it is believed, was

as lethal and less powerful

than those of 2 February and

which killed 40 people

in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and

shaking.

The two bombs, containing

400g of TNT, exploded

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obituaries / gazette

Harman Grisewood

Harman Grisewood, a founding father of the Third Programme and the holder of several top positions in the BBC, rose by an unusual route. During the Second World War, he suddenly leapfrogged from a relatively obscure post in Broadcasting House to become the Number 2 of the European Division in Bush House.

In 1941 Government ministers, using their wartime powers, had insisted that the BBC should appoint Ivone Kirkpatrick of the Foreign Office to the new post of Controller of the European Division, responsible immediately to the Director-General. The BBC in turn declared that Kirkpatrick must take as a deputy someone with substantial broadcasting experience. It was a hard driven bargain.

At Worcester College, Oxford, where he was a history scholar, Harman Grisewood had been a leading member of the OUDS. After he came down he took a humble job writing the labels for Fortnum and Mason's delicacies. One day an Oxford friend in charge of the *Children's Hour* at Savoy Hill invited him to read a chapter of *Ivanhoe* to the children. He came away with three guineas. This was three shillings more than he earned in a whole week at Fortnum and Mason. So he gave in his notice the next day and spent the next four years acting in radio plays with the BBC Repertory Company. In 1933 he joined the BBC staff as an announcer, like his better known cousin Freddie, and in



Grisewood: a cultivated mind

the early part of the war was engaged in routine work as a programme planner.

Harman Grisewood had a cultivated mind, though not at that time any great knowledge of foreign affairs, nor indeed of European languages. He had not sought the Bush House job, which involved a substantial promotion, nor had he been known of it before he was appointed. Moreover Kirkpatrick, who had been educated by Benedictines at Downside, considered he had no need of an Assistant Controller at all, and certainly not one who had attended Ampleforth, the Jesuit boarding school in Yorkshire. "Two Catholics," he warned Grisewood, "some people will make trouble."

But fears of a Protestant backlash were ill founded, and Kirkpatrick and Grisewood worked harmoniously together and with the rest of us in Bush House. Harman Grisewood headed the European Service

for nine months at the end of the war on a temporary basis, after the Foreign Office had reclaimed Kirkpatrick, and indeed had hopes of becoming its permanent chief.

But what was needed for the Controller in peacetime was authority in Whitehall, which Grisewood, for all his qualities, lacked. The post went to Sir Ian Jacob, the former Assistant Military Secretary to the Cabinet, and Grisewood dropped down to become the number two in the Talks Division. He disliked its squatting atmosphere and in 1947, unwell and disenchanted with the BBC, he resigned.

Grisewood's autobiography *One Thing at a Time* (1968) recounted a conversation at the time of Suez with Sir Anthony Eden's Press and Public Relations Secretary, the late William Clark. "William told me that the Prime Minister had instructed the Lord Chancellor to prepare an instrument which would take over the BBC altogether and subject it wholly to the will of the Government."

This statement was widely discussed after its publication in 1968 and even debated in the House of Commons. William Clark admitted to me some years later that in talking to Grisewood he had exaggerated the specific plans afoot. Clark's diary, written at the time of Suez, but published after his death, makes no mention of the alleged instruction to the Lord Chancellor.

Nevertheless throughout the Suez crisis the BBC was under very heavy pressure from the

DSW, responsible for those programme areas which attracted the most controversy: News, Religion, Talks and Education. Complaints from educationists and the clergy were usually just as vociferous as those from politicians, if marginally less self-serving.

When Sir Ian Jacob became Director-General he appointed Grisewood as his Chief Assistant and abolished the title of Director of the Spoken Word. Grisewood became the channel for communications between the DG and the political parties as well as among the current affairs departments of the BBC.

Grisewood's autobiography



Portrait of a Maker (Harman Grisewood) by David Jones, 1932

National Museums & Galleries of Wales

Leonard Miall

Harman Joseph Gerard Grisewood, actor, BBC executive and author, born 8 February 1906; BBC Repertory Company 1929-33; Announcer, BBC 1933-36, Assistant to Programme Organiser 1936-39, Assistant Director Programme Planning 1939-41, Assistant Controller, European Division 1941-45, Director Talks Division 1946-52, Planner Third Programme 1947-48, Controller of the Third Programme 1948-52, Director of the Spoken Word 1952-55, Chief Assistant to the Director-General 1955-64; CBE 1960; Knight of Grace and Devotion, SMO Malta 1960; author of Broadcasting and Society 1949, The Recess 1963, The Last Cab on the Rank 1964, David Jones: Welsh National Lecture 1966, One Thing at a Time 1968, The Painted Kipper 1970, Stratagem 1987; married 1940 Margaret Bailey (one daughter); died Eye, Suffolk 8 January 1997.

Sándor Végh



Energy invested in music is never lost: Végh at the Edinburgh Festival, 1996. Photograph: Clive Barda

The death of Sándor Végh sees the passing of one of the last of the great Hungarian violinists who could trace their traditions back through Huhay and Joachim to the Italian violinist Viotti. Végh was, throughout his long career, soloist, chamber musician, conductor and teacher, and it would be difficult to say in which of these activities he served best the cause of music. In other words, he was a giant, whose accomplishments are indelibly etched upon every one of his undertakings.

Végh was born in 1912 in Kolozsvár in Transylvania and studied at the Academy of Music in Budapest (1924-30) with Jenő Hubay (violin), Leo Weiner (chamber music) and Zoltán Kodály (composition). He made his debut in 1931 with the Hungarian Trio and thereafter toured with them and as a soloist throughout Europe. He became leader of the Hungarian String Quartet from its foundation in 1935 until 1938, giving the first performance of the Bartók Quartet No 5 with them in Barcelona in 1936. In 1940 he founded the Végh Quartet which he led for 58 years, touring Europe, North and South America and Asia: they also recorded the complete cycles of the Beethoven and Bartók quartets and in 1978 the quartet's recording of Beethoven's Op. 130 was launched by NASA on board Voyager's extra-solar trajectory.

Végh was professor of violin at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest (1941-45) and emigrated to Switzerland in 1946. He became a French citizen in 1952, holding professorships at the Academy of Music, Basle (1953-63) the Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg (1956-64), Hochschule für Musik, Düsseldorf (1964-74) and the Hochschule Mozarteum, Salzburg (1970-87). At the same time he continued to give international master-classes, solo performances, play chamber music and make recordings. Outstanding among these are the Beethoven sonatas for Violin and Piano with András Schiff, and the complete Mozart piano concertos with Schiff and Végh conducting the Salzburg Philharmonic Academy.

Végh founded the Festival of Music at Cervi in Italy in 1962, and collaborated with Pablo Casals in the Festivals at Prades from 1953 to 1969, as a soloist

playing under many famous conductors including Willem Mengelberg, Ernő Dohnányi, Josef Krips, Casals, Rudolf Serkin and Wilhelm Kempff. He

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some 2,000 musicians throughout the world and has a firm place in British musical life. Végh retired as artistic director in 1996.

Végh's playing was distinguished by its purity and warmth of tone, and above all, his breadth of musical understanding. He was once asked what was the difference between his generation and the young people of today as regards their approach to music. He replied:

The great difference is that the world of today is permeated by technology and ruled by machines. Our generation was still near to nature and our experience of sensations of every kind was not watered down by mechanical reproduction. We came to musical education already impregnated by a life and vibrant musical background. The whole atmosphere into which we were born was already, by definition, a musical one.

In his own case, true to his words, Sándor Végh was still making beautiful music on his superb violin, the "Earl of Harrington" Stradivarius, right up to the last.

Margaret Campbell

Sándor Végh, violinist; born Kolozsvár, Transylvania 17 May 1912; Professor of Violin, László Academy of Music, Budapest 1941-45; Professor of Violin, Academy of Music, Basle 1953-63; Professor of Violin, Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg 1956-64; Professor of Violin, Hochschule für Musik, Düsseldorf 1964-74; Professor of Violin, Hochschule Mozarteum, Salzburg 1970-87; artistic director, International Musicians Seminar 1972-96; Honorary CBE 1988; married (one daughter); died Freiburg, Germany 7 January 1997.

One had only to watch Végh giving a master-class to see what he meant. He would pin-point exactly the fault of a student and by demonstrating, remonstrating and gesticulating like a ten-armed windmill, he would bring about a complete metamorphosis in the most timid young player.

As a man he was small of stature, but gigantic in personality, and his facial expressions, grunts and gurgles were all part of the scenario which drew the most highly criticised students to return

year after year to ask for more.

When asked, well into his sixties, if he hoped to remain as active as ever into old age, he replied:

Activity is the expression of an inner rhythm. Energy invested in music is never lost. Rhythm is an expression of life itself. Everything that has to do with music is retard and only a sense of time is of any use. To participate in music has a definite therapeutic value from this point of view. Have you ever seen a senile musician? Look at Emile Saer, Felix Weingartner, Pierre Monteux, Ernst Ansermet, Stokowski, Artur Rubinstein and many others.

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Ronald Fowler's life as a teacher of economics, an original thinker, and a writer of scholarly texts was ended by Hitler when the Second World War drew him into the civil service and transformed a promising analyst of industry into a conscientious "public" servant. The Austrian economist Friedrich Wieser, whose theory of value as "opportunity cost", the sacrifice of alternatives, I often discussed with Fowler, indicated the real cost of the lost scholar.

He was born in 1910, and showed early promise at Bancroft's School that led him to the London School of Economics, where he was taught by the influential liberal school, of Professors Lionel (later Lord) Robbins, (Sir) Arnold Plant, (Sir) John Hicks and others. He graduated (with honours) in 1931, was awarded a Cassell Travelling Scholarship, named after the industrial benefactor of scholarship Sir Ernest Cassell, and appointed Lecturer in Commerce in 1932, a post he held until 1940 when he was recruited into the wartime Central Statistical Office.

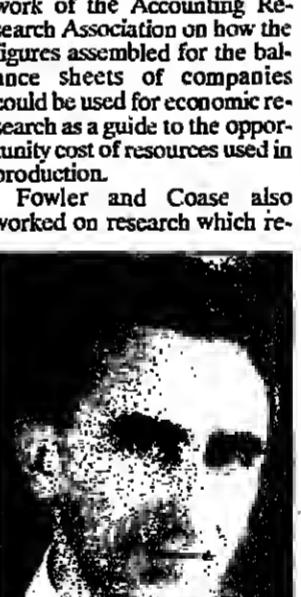
At the LSE he had taken to research that yielded new insights on the pricing system of the market. His book on *The Depreciation of Capital* in 1934 was preceded by correspondence in 1932-33 on an idea being developed by his student friend, Ronald Coase, another Cassell Travelling Scholar, whose classic article "The Nature of the Firm" in the 1937 LSE journal *Economica*, eventually revolutionised economic thinking on the structure of industry. Fowler's book showed that although the economic system of competing firms was, as Adam Smith showed in 1776, co-ordinated by the pricing system, it was the "transaction

costs" of deals between firms that explained why it was preferable to replace it only within firms by internal allocation of resources.

This theory was so radical that economists underrated it for many years. But together with another historic Coase article in 1961 on "The Problem of Social Cost", published in the University of Chicago *Journal of Law and Economics*, it formed the basis of the award to Coase in 1991 of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. In his writings, as in his recent book *On Economics and Economists* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), Coase generously acknowledged the intellectual co-operation of the early 1930s from his student friend and colleague.

Fowler also collaborated fruitfully with Coase and another LSE colleague, (Sir) Ronald Edwards, Chairman of the Electricity Council, in the work of the Accounting Research Association on how the figures assembled for the balance sheets of companies could be used for economic research as a guide to the opportunity cost of resources used in production.

Fowler and Coase also worked on research which re-



Fowler: analytical

vealed that, in deciding future output, producers did not, as economists had supposed, assume that prices would remain unchanged. If they did, output would fluctuate. In pig production they found that when prices were unusually high, producers expected them to fall, and when unusually low they were expected to rise. Fluctuations in prices would level out outputs. Fowler applied the analysis to the production of steel in an article published in the United States in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

From 1937 until military service I shared Fowler's room when I was appointed to the LSE Research Staff. I was awed to find that he had as neighbours the intellectual giant Friedrich Hayek and the distinguished refugee from Cambridge, Professor D.H. Robertson, who had moved after differences with the Keynesians. After the war Fowler and I lived near each other in west Kent. He was godfather to our first son.

Fowler also applied his analytical mind to Whitehall. He was at the Central Statistical Office from 1940 to 1950, and Director of Statistical Research until 1972. On retirement he was Consultant to the Prices Division of Statistics Canada in Ottawa 1971-72.

His varied researches produced a published paper on "The Duration of Unemployment" in 1968 and two papers on "Problems of Index Number Construction" in 1970 and 1973. His consultancies led to articles in British and American economic and statistical journals. Fowler seemed to indicate that the change from the executive to the research post fol-

Diana Morgan

I first met Diana Morgan 12 years ago, writes Dan Crawford, further to the obituary by Adam Benedict, 6 January.

I had been asked to produce a review for the King's Head, Islington, that would use material first performed at the pre-war Gate Theatre. Diana's careful crafting of the history of the Gate and her profound

understanding of the time historically and dramatically made the show a considerable success.

Diana was then commissioned by us to adapt Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* as a musical. This was finally presented in 1994 both over the summer holidays and as a children's matinée and a

Christmas. It also played at the Watermill Theatre in Newbury to full houses over the 1994 Christmas season.

Diana Morgan was a marvellous team player, always ready to make rewrites in spite of the infirmity of age and near total blindness. If more humour was required, something that didn't come natural-

ly to *The Secret Garden*, she was able to supply it on the spot. She well understood the importance of sentimental shading, when to let emotions flow.

Flexible flexibility: Europe's way forward

John Major came out smiling from his meeting with Wim Kok, the Dutch Prime Minister, on Tuesday night. So, oddly enough, did Mr Kok. Their meeting was a reminder that Britain can do business in Europe on a mutually beneficial basis, even during the run-up to an election.

The Independent was pretty pleased with Tuesday, because it provided a straight answer to one of our benchmark questions for the election: will the Conservatives pull out of Europe if things go against them? No, said Mr Major, in a fairly unequivocal way. That was a signal to British voters, and to other European leaders, that although monetary union and the Social Chapter might be hotly contested in this election, membership of the European Union is not going to be a political football; and a good thing too.

Mr Kok and Mr Major were pleased because they came close to patching up a divisive row that had threatened to derail the intergovernmental conference, the long-distance talkfest that is intended to end in a rewrite of the Maastricht Treaty. The key area under discussion was flexibility, the idea that under certain circumstances a core group of countries in the European Union can go ahead of the others in exploring new areas of co-operation.

The main area for exploring flexibility will be what is called Common Justice and Home Affairs, the rag-bag

of policies that includes immigration, policing, judicial affairs and what diplomats call "drugs and thugs" – narcotics and organised crime. Some countries (led by Germany) want much tighter co-operation and integration. Others (led by the British government) don't. We are an island, we have different legal and judicial traditions, and anyway, Michael Howard hates the EU.

There is a bigger philosophical issue behind this than the likes and dislikes of the Home Secretary, however. Flexibility is the buzzword in the EU, because there is a pressing need to find a way to accommodate EU partners with different needs and capabilities.

When there were six members of the European Community, it was right to move in lockstep. When there were nine, it became more difficult. Now there are 15; in five years there will be 20, 25, or 30, stretching from Dublin to Lublin and beyond. The EU has already started experimenting with the principle of different strokes for different folks: it provides monetary union, border control policy under the Schengen agreement, and defence arrangements in the Western European Union.

But it needs to go further. Both the Europhiles and the Europhobes agree that Europe has to accommodate diversity through flexible integration. John Major has talked about a multi-speed, multi-track, multi-layer Europe; Ger-

many talks about the dangers of forcing the whole convoy to travel at the pace of the slowest ship. But up until now, there has been no agreed definition of how to do this.

Britain wants to ensure that it cannot be forced out of an inner group and left on the shelf; equally, it wants the right to be involved selectively, in areas of integration that it thinks desirable. The federalists are worried that letting the slowcoach keep a veto will take away the point of the exercise. There has been a choice between wobbly flexibility, too insubstantial to suit the hardcore Europeans, and doctrinaire flexi-

bility, too rigid to be of much interest to Britain. The compromise seems to be flexible flexibility: allowing people to go ahead, but making sure that those in the outer core have guaranteed safeguards.

This is a trebly important move. First, it means that there is now room for agreement on the issue of the principles underlying European Union structures. Secondly, it means that a revision of the passages of the Maastricht Treaty covering justice and home affairs may now be possible. That would remove perhaps the single greatest obstacle to a new treaty for Europe. Thirdly, it

shows that even now – even in the heat of a pre-election campaign, when Cabinet ministers like Stephen Dorrell are hinting at a tougher stance on Europe – compromise can be reached by rational men using rational means.

It is quite possible, likely even, that the Prime Minister who agrees the new treaty will be Tony Blair rather than John Major. But the Labour leader is likely to have few problems with the kind of solution that Mr Major and Mr Kok have discussed. There is less difference between the two over the institutional future of Europe than either likes to pretend. Both have a healthy degree of scepticism about the grander and vaguer European pipe-dreams: both want Britain in the European Union to stay; both realise that pragmatic compromises are the way to maintain that.

The fact that Mr Major can maintain that line when the question of his leadership is being openly debated says much for him, and for the degree of continuity that should prevail when (if) Mr Blair steps through the doors of 10 Downing Street.

There are still plenty of hurdles. But probably, the new treaty will be agreed later this year without too much fuss and bother. There is still the danger of a Kok-up, of course, if the Netherlands decide to push things too far and too fast. That happened during the conferences which led up to the Maastricht

summit, when a Dutch treaty draft proved too federalist for several countries (including Britain and France) to swallow. And then there is the chance of a Major catastrophe, if the Prime Minister again finds himself with his back against the wall in the run-up to an election and decides to play the Eurosceptic card.

But the odds are that neither party wants that. As Mr Major said, Europe needs a dose of British pragmatism, and that is what it seems to be getting.

Children in need of some charity

The awful story of Rikki Neave demands that we ask some fundamental questions. As Polly Toynbee has pointed out, the Prime Minister is misguided in his ritual attacks on social workers: part of the problem is that they do not have the resources to interfere enough. But then, it is also true that some social services departments are simply failures. In view of the role played by The Bridge, a charity which conducted the Neave inquiry, should not voluntary organisations with good track records, such as Barnardos and the NSPCC, be more involved? Is it time to turn to the private carers?



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We need a real debate on the monarchy

Sir: If that was the "nation deciding", then God help us all. Carlton TV's live debate on Tuesday resembled a fight in a pub car park at times.

The pity is that there is a serious debate which desperately needs to take place about the constitutional position of the monarchy. The Windsors' own private think-tank, the Way Ahead Group has started the ball rolling with its suggestions in August 1996 of disestablishing the Church of England and scrapping the Civil List. Lord Archer has placed the issue on the Lords' agenda, with his bill to end male primogeniture in the succession to the throne. Labour's plans for ending hereditary peers' right to vote highlights the issue further. My own Fabian pamphlet *Long to Reign Over Us?*, in a small way, attempted to move things on.

The issues of the monarchical powers exercised by the Prime Minister using the Royal Prerogative (including choosing the date of the next election); the role of the Crown and Commonwealth; the increasingly unpalatable financial arrangements; whether or not Buckingham Palace should stay open to the public after the five-year experiment ends next year; whether replacing *Britannia* at a cost of £100m is the most cost-effective way to support British exports: all these issues need airing in an informed and dispassionate manner, and politicians, who ultimately will take the decisions, must take the lead.

PAUL RICHARDS

London W6

Sir: Surely it was in *The Independent* that I read, only a few weeks ago, that phone-in polls were now being seen as a useless technique for assessing public opinion. "About time too," I thought, silently congratulating *The Independent* on having finally woken up. But today (8 January) you carry a front page news story based on a phone-in poll by Carlton TV on the monarchy.

I am a professional sample survey specialist. In my job we all learnt many years ago, through some famous poll disasters, that self-selected samples are not representative samples and cannot be relied on. Phone-in samples are self-selected. Such polls are just entertainment.

CHRIS SCOTT

London N19

Sir: You have surpassed yourself in the art of negative headlining ("Monarchy should go," says a third of TV poll", 8 January). What can we look forward to on the morning after the election – "Tories must stay, says a quarter of the electorate"?

PAUL DANEMAN

London SW15

Sir: By no stretch of the imagination could Tuesday night's television programme on the future of the monarchy be dignified by the title of "debate". It was an unsupervised free-for-all and the public figures on both sides who took part must surely regret that they did.

However, the result of the telephone poll did mirror the results of other recent polls, finding that two-thirds of the country still want a monarchy.

But there should be no complacency at the Palace, for



more to the point one-third of the people now want a republic – an alarming increase for a movement that until a short time ago was regarded as a small, fringe group of crackpots.

ROBERT READMAN

Sandbanks, Dorset

Sir: My wife and I loyally voted (several times) for a constitutional monarchy. However, our Labrador voted republican. Such was the accuracy of this travesty of a referendum.

C D SMITH

Danby, North Yorkshire

Sir: Camelot's recent advertisement, "A general election every day" was no doubt in jest, but actually they have built a system that could collect a vote from all those entitled, on such issues as the single European currency, proportional representation and the reform of the House of Lords.

Most of the adult population know how to select their numbers on a lottery card and could do something similar to register a vote. Conveniently there is a Camelot terminal nearer to most of us than our local polling station. I expect Camelot would be willing to collect the votes and process them for 5p each, their normal cut of your lottery pound. This would cost a lot less than renting all those schools and paying the returning officers. I trust that front-bench spokesmen on information technology on both sides of the House are actively looking at this opportunity to bring greater

democracy to us all at an affordable price.

JOHN LANE

London WC2

Sir: Is there any way in which I can place my vote now, then cancel all

newspapers and switch off all radio and TV news programmes until after the election?

G O JONES

Oxford

Sir: Stephen Goodwin's article (30 December) on the supposed rift between climbers and ramblers outlines some of the proposals in the British Mountaineering Council's Access Charter, but omits others.

The Charter does not simply echo the arguments of landowners; after 25 years' experience of negotiating access arrangements to cliffs and mountain areas, the BMC knows that negotiation and reasonable agreements are essential to secure access to the wider countryside, and therefore they are part of the BMC package of proposals that includes new legislation. The Access Charter clearly argues that there should be freedom of access to open country. It is therefore a charter for all climbers, hill-walkers, and mountaineers.

However, an approach based on blanket legislation and a definition of open country would not cover all parts of the countryside (for example Labour's current proposals do not include heathland, river

banks, forests, cliffs, and foreshore). The BMC supports an approach to open country that acknowledges that there is currently freedom of access (if not a formal right) over large areas of mountain and moorland; and that where access is unreasonably prevented, local and national park authorities should secure access through powers which have existed for 50 years (under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949) but have remained largely unused.

The Ramblers Association has produced a formula for securing new access in the form of a draft Bill; the BMC has always been concerned about the restrictive nature and cost of such an approach. The BMC Charter is a constructive contribution to this debate and I hope the RA will accept it as such.

GEORGE BAND

President

British Mountaineering Council

Manchester

Other non-toxic cartridges have been produced, and the most widely available contain steel shot. Steel is a much harder material than lead, with greater risks of ricochet and damage to gun barrels. Steel therefore has a limited popularity among wildfowlers.

Other non-toxic shot types are being developed, and cartridges containing pure tin shot have recently been introduced. Tin is non-toxic, has been used as a replacement for lead in fishing weights since 1986, and is a soft material similar to lead.

KAY NIMMO

International Tin Research Institute

Uxbridge Middlesex

Shot, but not poisoned

Sir: Bob Lang (letter, 7 January) raised concerns over the continued use of lead shot in wildfowling and its effect on the environment. It has been reported that the lives of 3 million ducks and geese are claimed worldwide per year through lead poisoning.

Many countries, for example Denmark, Finland and the United States, have introduced legislation preventing the use of lead shot over wetlands. In the UK a voluntary ban is in place, in an attempt to create an effective ban on lead from September 1997. If this is successful it will prevent statutory controls being introduced.

Various non-toxic cartridges have been produced, and the most widely available contain steel shot. Steel is a much harder material than lead, with greater risks of ricochet and damage to gun barrels. Steel therefore has a limited popularity among wildfowlers.

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KAY NIMMO

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Uxbridge Middlesex

IRA 'political prisoners'

Sir: Boyd Tonkin ("Helen's game", 9 January) criticises the film *Some Mother's Son* for staying away from the real issues in Northern Ireland. He then shies away from the heart of the hunger-strike – the fight by republican prisoners to retain the political status (officially termed "special category status") that had been accorded them and others since 1972.

To say that the British government had "toughened their prison regime" or "stripped them of privileges" makes it sound as though they were concerned about baying toasters and tipples in their cells. Of course the strike was about much more. In the words of a song sung by the prisoners themselves:

"I'll wear no convict's uniform
Nor weekly serve my time
Thai Britain might brand Ireland's fight
Eight hundred years of crime."

N D MARTIN-CLARK

London WC1

A tax on the rich that delivers few votes and less revenue

So it looks as though Tony Blair has won his argument with Gordon Brown over the top rate of income tax. We will have to wait a few weeks more for confirmation, but it seems that the plan supported by the shadow Chancellor, to increase the top rate of tax from 40 per cent to 50 per cent for incomes of more than £100,000, will not now go ahead. Mr Blair apparently felt that it gave the wrong signal about Labour's tax intentions.

But there is an even more powerful reason than Mr Blair's political judgement for opposing the idea. It is the possibility that, far from increasing tax revenue, it might actually cut it. Most people would assume that if you put tax rates up, people pay more tax. For most taxes and most people that is probably true. But for the particular group of people who might be hit, this may not be right. To see why, here are some very rough calculations which show on various assumptions the extent to which any additional revenue would be offset by other declines.

The starting point is the Inland Revenue calculation that implementing this top rate of tax on all earnings over £100,000 would raise an additional £1,100 in revenue. That may sound a lot, though it is actually only a third of 1 per cent of public spending. It seems astonishing, but that calculation is based on the assumption that there would be no change at all in people's behaviour as a result of the tax increase. That is unrealistic, for there are bound to be some changes, and these changes are going to cut revenue. So that £1,100 is an absolute maximum. The real total will be lower.

Start, then, with £1,100. The people who might pay can avoid it in one of two (legal) ways. They can either leave the UK tax net altogether, or they can change their tax arrangements to cut nominal income. The first question is: how many people might leave?

There are about 120,000 people who have a taxable income of more than £100,000. Not many of those either have the opportunity or would want to go to the避难所 of moving abroad just because of income tax. The main group of people who emigrate for tax reasons are those selling businesses and retiring, and they are avoiding inheritance and capital gains tax rather than income tax. But some people might take the rise in income tax as a signal that other taxes might also be increased and act accordingly. Others might be trying to reach a decision and this would be the thing which pushed them over.

So let us assume that, within a couple of years, 2 per cent of those high earners, 2,400 people, would leave. That may be too high or too low, but it is at least a figure. For those people, the Exchequer loses all tax, not just the income tax that they would have paid, but their capital gains tax, the VAT on their purchases, what they spend on petrol, the council tax, and so on. Let us assume, too, that these tend to be richer than the average of the 120,000: that they have been earning £200,000 and paying a total of, say, £100,000 a year in all forms of taxation. That knocks £240m off revenues.

Next, look at the people who stay in the country, but change their habits. There are two possibilities here. One is simply to earn less. Some people who were going to retire soon



Hannish McRae

Gordon Brown's 50 per cent top tax rate would probably have failed as high earners emigrated or used loopholes

might decide to do so three or four years earlier than they planned. Others might trade money for lifestyle: leave the high-pressure job in the City and work for a charity. Let us assume that another 2 per cent of the 120,000 opt for a change of lifestyle and that their tax payments fall by, say, £50m.

The other change of habit is less radical, for it involves using the various available tax loopholes more thoroughly. Most high-earners are probably already using their full pension allowances, but not all will be. Assume that this prods most of those laggards into action, and that, at the margin, some high earners opt for other non-salaried benefits instead of more cash. A whole industry exists developing such reward packages, but at 40 per cent many people prefer the convenience of cash. Assume, too, that a rather higher proportion of taxpayers buys into tax-favoured investments such as enterprise investment trusts. If, on average, each of the 120,000 people managed on average to clip £5,000 off their tax bill in this way, that would be a further cut of £60m in revenues.

Add this up and you can see that a third of the additional revenue raised by the tax increase would probably slide away. This direct loss might be much more: it is certainly hard to see it being less.

On top of this are the second-order effects: the impact on people who would not pay the tax, but fear that they might at some future stage find themselves doing so.

People on the present top rate of 40 per cent pay £300m of the total £70bn income tax revenue. Any increase in income tax will focus attention on the various opportunities everyone has to cut their bill – typically by making sure that they take up their full pension allowances. If higher-rate payers chipped just 1 per cent off their tax bill by exploiting these schemes, that would be another £300m off revenues. Suddenly two-thirds of the expected gain from the tax increase is lost.

So, on these pretty cautious assumptions, after a couple of years, when people had time to adjust their behaviour, the additional revenue would not be £1,100, but more like £300m to £350m. It might well be less. If one makes more radical assumptions about likely changes in people's habits, you could find the government actually losing revenue.

No one can prove this, because no one can predict how behaviour will change. But we do know from phenomena, such as the unpredicted surge in cross-Channel booze imports, that once people get it into their heads that they can avoid a tax, they will race to do so. If they think tax rates are being increased for largely symbolic reasons, then the impetus to avoid those higher rates is all the greater.

All the talk of a higher top tax rate will already have done some damage. Anyone who moves in these circles will know people who have moved out of the UK in the past year or so in case Labour puts up taxes. If Mr Blair has now imposed his will on his colleagues, then it will be because he recognises that higher tax rates are the wrong symbol. But he and his friends should take comfort from the fact that what makes electoral sense also makes practical sense. Holding rates at a relatively low level actually underpins the government's future revenue base, not the reverse.

Next, look at the people who stay in the country, but change their habits. There are two possibilities here. One is simply to earn less. Some people who were going to retire soon

immediately because hospitals filled up fast before Christmas. "Face lifts and tummy tucks for the party season," he said. I felt I had no choice.

But how could the price have jumped by £500 overnight? I told a doctor friend, who said I had probably been marked out as a potential "private" the moment I walked into the consultant's room. I was advised to ring round some private hospitals and get quotes, and to negotiate if necessary.

The cost started to fall immediately: £2,200 at one hospital, £1,600 plus surgeon and anaesthetist's fees at another (about £2,000); between £1,200 and £1,600 at the third I tried. I made an appointment with a consultant at the last, a private hospital in south-west London. The surgeon said he could do the operation as a day case, no problem. When I asked him about the plastic surgery I needed to prevent my nose "dropping" he laughed and said that only happened in about one in 1,000 cases.

What about the expensive drugs I would need afterwards? Some cephadrine nose drops would help, he admitted, "but salt water splashed up your nostrils a few times is probably the best thing."

"And you may need some plastic surgery to prevent your nose 'dropping' after we take out the cartilage, Elizabeth, and then there are the drugs you'll need afterwards. It is £800 up front payable to the hospital, Elizabeth, and then the rest after the operation. It's a three-month wait. The problem, I was told by the consultant, ear, nose and throat surgeon, could be rectified with a simple operation. "I'll put you on the waiting list," he said.



Liz Hunt

If you decide to jump the NHS queue and pay for surgery, you find yourself in a jungle. Be a 'consumer' and shop around

The waiting list was nine to 12 months long, possibly longer if the winter of 1996-97 turned out to be a bad one and non-emergency operations were cancelled. I was half-way to the door of his office before I asked tentatively what it would cost to have it done privately.

"Do you have private health insurance?" he asked. I didn't. Suddenly I was transformed into a much more interesting patient. My consultant's eyes really did light up as he replied: "About £2,000. Here is my card with the numbers for my private rooms. Call me tomorrow."

I rang the next day, expecting to speak to the surgeon's secretary about fees. But I got Mr X himself on the line, his manner only a little more oily than the day before, and he called me "Elizabeth" at every opportunity. "Well, Elizabeth, I've done a few calculations and the cheapest package I can come up with is £2,500. We can't do it as a day case, Elizabeth, so you will have to stay overnight in hospital, and of course that pushes up the price."

"And you may need some plastic surgery to prevent your nose 'dropping' after we take out the cartilage, Elizabeth, and then there are the drugs you'll need afterwards. It is £800 up front payable to the hospital, Elizabeth, and then the rest after the operation. It's a three-month wait. The problem, I was told by the consultant, ear, nose and throat surgeon, could be rectified with a simple operation. "I'll put you on the waiting list," he said.

He urged me to book my bed

Heroes must do more than entertain us

by Suzanne Moore



If men really want to know about pushing oneself to the limits, about physical pain and endurance, they could try giving birth

Everything has been discovered. Circumnavigated, survived single-handedly. Their adventures are increasingly artificial, man-made if you like. There is little left for them to pit their minds and bodies against except ludicrous records that most of us care nothing about anyway.

The *Guinness Book of Records* is riveting when you are 10 years old, but surely its appeal lessens as one reaches middle age. If it doesn't – and for some strange reason, for a certain breed of men and the long-distance walker Fyona Campbell this appears to be the case – then in order to prove one's uniqueness, one has to undertake a vastly expensive adventure.

Likewise, we assume that the stresses of the mega-successful are somehow greater than those of the anonymous failures. Stress, living in the spotlight, the trappings of fame itself are spoken of as the final test of a man. I don't doubt that

Kevin Keegan was a good football manager or that he was under pressure, but he was well rewarded for it.

Was his stress greater than that of an inner-city schoolteacher, a junior doctor who worked solidly for 36 hours, a lone mother worrying about how she will pay for her children's birthday presents? Is it a national tragedy when a man decides to quit a high-profile job "for the sake of his family".



Mamei is not a statistic.

She's not one of the 11,000 women who will die this week for want of something we take for granted... the basic human right to family planning.

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business & city

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BZW's £6m man needs to produce some results fast

Bill Harrison, recently appointed chief executive at Barclays' investment banking arm, BZW, is a man in a hurry. And well he needs to be, for according to banking analysts, BZW remains a comparatively poorly performing investment bank, even after a boom year in capital markets which has seen many City traders transformed into millionaires.

Suggestions in the City that he has already had one business plan torn up and thrown back in his face are vehemently denied by both Barclays and BZW. But this has failed to bury rumours of growing concern at Barclays head office over poor re-

Lacklustre performance is worrying the City, despite Bill Harrison's hiring and firing. Jill Treanor reports

turns and strategy in investment banking.

Mr Harrison, a 48-year-old plain-talking Brummie, was lured from Robert Fleming, the merchant bank, this summer on a pay deal worth £6m over five years. He arrived just after Bob Diamond, the other key recruit in the new-look BZW. Mr Diamond runs global markets in return for a pay deal which is rumoured almost to match that of Mr Harrison.

So far progress has been slow.

John Leonard, a top banking analyst at Salomon Brothers, has cut his pre-tax profits forecast for BZW in the second half of 1996 to £118m, despite the fact that most other investment banks in the City are on track for a record year.

In the first half, before Mr Harrison took the helm, after the death of David Band, BZW made profits of £157m, a figure which disappointed some analysts at the time.

According to Mr Leonard, the new regime has so far been finan-

cially negative in its impact – rising costs and falling revenues. Mr Diamond is rumoured to have fired as many as 130 staff and hired the same number again, quite possibly on higher pay deals.

According to insiders, staff have been so busy watching their backs that they have not had time to go out and win business. At the same time key personnel who had developed good relationships with clients have been fired.

Mr Diamond has ousted senior

figures such as Klaus-Peter Moeritz, head of foreign exchange trading in the UK and Europe, and Alex von Uengen-Sternberg, deputy chief executive of the markets division. Others who have gone include Yann Gindre, head of debt origination, Nick Carter, head of swaps marketing, Rob Ellis, head of structured products, and Steve Hounes, joint heads of debt syndicate.

Mr Harrison, meanwhile, has been busy instilling fear in his staff

with his phenomenal appetite for work. He claims, apparently seriously, that time spent at home is a wasted marketing opportunity.

"The personnel changes in BZW's fixed income unit may have at least temporary revenue implications as well as adding to costs," Mr Leonard said in recent research. However, while he has trimmed his forecasts for the entire Barclays group for 1996, he is confident about the bank's performance in 1997 and 1998.

Robert Law, banking analyst at

Lehman Brothers, the US investment bank, also expects costs to rise at BZW. He forecasts a rise of 10 per cent, which will account for most of the cost enhancement of the entire Barclays group.

Costs are also rising because BZW is in the process of moving to new premises in Canary Wharf, analysts point out. All points to a picture of rapidly escalating costs and poor return on capital. But although there may be special factors at work at BZW, this is by no means a unique set of circumstances.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

Insurers fail to cut charges after disclosure

Nic Cicutti



Colette Bowe: Faces little enthusiasm for competition

Insurance companies are still refusing to cut charges on the policies they sell, almost two years after new rules forcing costs to be disclosed, the Personal Investment Authority admitted yesterday.

Despite hopes of a price war in the wake of the new disclosure regime in 1995, most companies charge as much on their policies as last year, according to a survey by the PIA. This is in contrast to claims three years ago by the Securities and Investments Board, the senior regulator, that the new disclosure regime would yield annual savings of £1bn for policyholders.

While the average charges imposed by all insurers dropped by 3.9 per cent across the board compared to 12 months ago, this was mostly accounted for by uncompetitive companies whose products are among the least successful commercially.

The vast majority, including Commercial Union, Norwich Union and NPI, have not lowered charges. Several of the more competitive firms until last year, including Allied Dunbar and many Scottish life insurers, have taken advantage of the new disclosure regime to raise their charges to match their rivals.

Joe Palmer, chairman of the PIA, said in the report: "Although the full impact of the disclosure regime may only fully emerge over time, we still consider this information to be an important part of the PIA's accountability to investors."

The PIA yesterday refused to comment publicly on this new evidence. But it is understood that the regulator is growing increasingly concerned at the unwillingness of companies to compete within the new climate offered by the disclosure rules introduced under its chief executive Colette Bowe two years ago.

It also broke with past policy by publicly acknowledging for

attempt to get competition going. This now needs careful monitoring to ensure competition does take place."

Ms Hall, however, welcomed the publication of the disclosure document, which she said offered consumers an opportunity to make more informed choices.

The figures also indicate that where companies had the chance to sell their products across several distribution channels, at least one of which was cheaper, they made no attempt to reflect this in the costs imposed on consumers.

Among the firms which have refused to differentiate between the channels selling their pension products are AXA Equity & Law, Clerical Medical, Norwich Union, which is to float on the stock market later this year, and Sun Alliance, now merged with Royal Insurance.

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attempt to get competition going. This now needs careful monitoring to ensure competition does take place."

Personal pensions – how much the big insurers charge

	25 Year Unit Linked Personal Pensions, monthly premiums of £50 (assumes annual growth of 9 per cent)			
	5-year effect of deductions (31/1995)	maturity reduction in yield - 1995 (%)	5-year effect of deductions (31/1995)	maturity reduction in yield 1995
AbbeyLife	1.940	2.1	1.900	2.1
Abbey National Life	1.200	1.8	1.400	1.8
Albany Life	2.030	2.0	2.053	1.9
Allied Dunbar	1.730	1.8	1.780	1.7
AXA Equity & Law	1.610	2.2	1.610	2.2
Barclays Life	1.120	1.8	1.130	1.8
Black Horse Life	1.500	1.9	1.500	1.9
Britannia Life	1.777	1.9	1.770	1.9
Britannia Assurance	1.250	1.8	1.250 (WIP)	1.8 (WIP)
Canada Life	1.580	2.1	1.580	2.1
Clerical Medical & General	1.510	2.2	1.610	2.2
Colonial Mutual	1.590	2.1	1.760	2.2
Commercial Union	1.320	1.8	1.320	1.8
Cornhill	1.900	1.4	1.900	1.4
Cooperative Insurance Society	1.270 (WIP)	1.2 (WIP)	1.240 (WIP)	1.2 (WIP)
Eagle Star Life	1.820	1.7	1.820	1.7
Equitable Life	283	0.9	294	0.9
Friends Provident	1.160	1.6	1.170	1.6
General Accident Life	1.200	1.9	1.200	1.8
Guardian Financial Services	1.570	1.9	1.110	4
Legal & General	1.640	1.5	1.640	1.8
Lincoln Mutual	1.780	1.9	1.800	1.9
London and Manchester Assurance	1.840	2.2	1.600 (WIP)	2.0 (WIP)
Midland Life	1.040	1.8	1.040	1.8
National Mutual Life	1.210	1.5	1.110	1.3
National Provident Institution (NPI)	1.080	1.8	1.080	1.8
NorthWest Life	1.110	1.9	1.200	2.0
Norwich Union Life	1.360	1.8	1.360	1.8
Pearl	1.490	1.8	1.490	1.8
Reliance Life	1.350 (WIP)	2.3 (WIP)	1.430	2.6
Reliance Mutual	1.400	2.5	1.400	2.5
Royal Life	2.020	2.8	2.000	2.7
Scottish Amicable	1.430	1.5	1.600	1.4
Scottish Equitable	1.270	1.8	1.200	1.7
Scottish Life	1.410	1.8	1.334	1.8
Scottish Mutual	1.920	2.1	931	2.2
Scottish Provident	1.270	2.1	1.270	2.1
Scottish Widows	821	1.8	616	1.7
Skandia Life	1.890	1.8	1.890	1.8
Standard Life	746	1.9	746	1.9
Sun Alliance	797	1.9	713	1.8
Sun Life	1.670	2.0	1.650	1.9
Sun Life of Canada	1.450	1.6	1.770	2.7
TSB Life & Pensions	505	1.8	505	1.8

Where charges for unit-linked personal pensions have not been available, those for whole-life policies (WIP) are used, as indicated. Where different charges are levied by companies, the cheapest have been used. Reduction in yield is the average annual fall in the yield of a policy after company charges and commissions have been paid.

the first time that some companies, particularly those who still collect premiums door-to-door, can only achieve vaguely generous maturity payouts to the handful of policyholders who get that far by penalising the vast majority who halt their contributions early.

The report shows that independent financial advisers

(IFAs) show little or no bias towards companies which pay higher commission. Most opted for firms paying the same amount of remuneration. Unlike direct salesforces, growing numbers of IFAs are prepared to rebate some of their commission back to their clients.

But their choice of pension providers varied widely, includ-

ing companies where charges in the first five years ranged between £1,000 and £2,000. Charges – and the fact that many of them are levied in the first few years of a policy – can take up to 40 per cent of a fund's value.

Reliance Mutual, one of the companies named in the report, charges an average of 2.8 per cent each year over the 25-year

lifetime of a fund. Assuming contributions of £60 a month and investment growth of 9 per cent, the value of a fund with out any charges at all might reach almost £5,500. The effect of Reliance Mutual's charges in the first five years is to take up to £2,020 from the personal pension.

Table compiled by Nabilah Zar

Kinnock setback for BA hopes of alliance

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Airways' hopes of getting European Commission approval for its proposed alliance with American Airlines were dealt a serious setback yesterday when it emerged that Neil Kinnock, Transport Commissioner, has unexpectedly accepted that the two carriers

plan to sell off some of their lucrative runway slots at Heathrow Airport were illegal.

Mr Kinnock, who supports the principle of airlines buying and selling take-off and landing slots, had previously maintained that EC regulations probably did allow for the practice. However, following further analysis his department has concluded that its original interpretation of the rules was wrong. A source said: "Mr Kinnock's view has changed since December. It now appears that it's not really legal to trade slots."

The shift is likely to strengthen the position of the Competition Commissioner, Karel van Miert, who is also investigating the alliance and has insisted that slot trading is contrary to EC law and should be outlawed completely. The widening rift between the competition and transport commissioners will be referred to a hearing of the full Commission by the end of March. However, the source gave little hope of a compromise.

If the EC decides to outlaw formally slot trading it could severely weaken British Airways' negotiating position as it attempts to clear regulatory hurdles in the UK, the European Commission and the US.

The Office of Fair Trading has approved the tie-up with American on condition that the alliance gives up 168 slots at Heathrow over a two-year period, a figure equivalent to 12 daily round trips. The alliance would still be left with some 3,000 slots at Heathrow.

However, the OFT has not objected to British Airways' proposal that it should be allowed to sell off the slots, a move which could net the company £180m.

Industry experts have estimated slots at Heathrow, the world's busiest and most sought after airport, could be worth £1.5m each.

Opposition to British Airways' slot-trading plans mounted yesterday as three more US carriers – Continental, USAir and TWA – submitted critical responses to the OFT.

Continental, the world's seventh-largest carrier, launched the most outspoken attack on the alliance yet by a rival airline.

Barry Simon, Continental's head of international affairs, said: "The OFT's report is an intellectual and moral disgrace. It must be the result of political pressure."

Comment, page 23

High Court judgement in October 1995 that implied he had acted dishonestly as their underwriter. The judgment prompted Lloyd's to start the disciplinary inquiry, which will now be terminated.

In return for the settlement, Lloyd's is to drop a combination of the firm's personal payment and voluntary exit from the market was probably a harsher penalty than anything that would have come out of the formal disciplinary hearings. The £1m will be paid to the Merrett Syndicate 418 Names Association and distributed directly to the aggrieved names.

Stephen Merrett yesterday agreed a £3.2m settlement with

Lloyd's and a group of aggrieved names that will result in his exclusion for life from the market, writes Peter Rodgers.

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The Merrett names won a

Hansen steps out for fresh debut

Patrick Toohoo



From player to pundit: Alan Hansen will forecast for fund



COMMENT

'Present legislation places the Secretary of State in a quasi-judicial position when deciding whether or not to allow takeovers to proceed. That is always a dangerous place to leave an ambitious politician'

CONTINUED

Kinnock set back for BAE hopes alliance

Chris Godsmark

Business Editor

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Kinnock

Jobless at new high in struggling Germany

Imre Karacs

Bonn

Unemployment in Germany hit another post-war high in December, amid signs that the economy is again grinding to a halt after a modest recovery in the second half of last year.

According to figures released by the Federal Labour Office yesterday, unemployment rose by 48,000 last month to a seasonally-adjusted 4.156 million – equal to 10.8 per cent of the workforce. And next month the number of jobless is projected by economists to reach 4.5 million.

Much of the rise is attributed to a down-turn in the construction industry, exacerbated by the extremely cold weather that has been gripping Germany for the past fortnight. Economists have warned that the big freeze could push the overall German growth rate in the first quarter into negative figures, repeating last year's trend.

Even without the weather, the economy is faltering. Provisional figures released yesterday by the National Statistics Office showed last year's growth rate at 1.4 per cent, marginally below forecasts and much lower than the previous year's performance. The office estimates Germany's budget deficit for 1996 was around 3.9 per cent – well above the Maastricht target for European monetary union.

Whether the government can keep its budget deficit within 3 per cent in EMU's qualifying year will depend on the growth rate, which it predicts will be 2.5 per cent this year. That forecast is already off target, however, as it did not anticipate the current slow-down. A larger-than-expected unemployment rate will also place a heavy burden on expenditure, straining the budget beyond the permitted limits.

Multi-billion bid war for Hughes Electronics

David Usborne

New York

A multi-billion dollar bidding war has broken out in the US for the defence electronics business of Hughes Electronics, which has been put on the block by its parent, General Motors. The outcome could determine the final contours of the US defence industry after four years of consolidation.

Head-to-head in the battle for Hughes is Raytheon, which earlier this week disclosed that it was acquiring the defence electronics units of Texas Instruments and Northrop Grumman. Winning the race could be critical to each company's hopes of long-term survival as an independent force in the industry.

Raytheon was reported yesterday to have offered \$9bn (£5.3bn) for the Hughes business. Northrop Grumman,

Take politics out of merger decisions altogether

A lot of people have had good cause to rue Alan Lang's capricious approach to merger policy over the last year. But George Simpson, now managing director of GEC, is not one of them. When GEC hit for the warship builder, VSEL, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission decided it should be sent packing on the not unreasonable grounds that Britain only had three such yards and GEC already owned one of them.

Fortunately for GEC, Michael "National Champions" Heseltine, was in charge then at the Department of Trade and Industry and he duly brushed the MMC's recommendations aside. Would GEC have fared differently had Mr Lang then been in the hot seat?

In short, it is impossible to say. Mr Lang has executed so many U-turns since he arrived that if he isn't dizzy and thoroughly confused, then the rest of the business community certainly is.

In his last pronouncement on the subject, the President of the Board of Trade made it crystal clear that mergers which increased market domination or created national champions were not on. Since then he has blocked the Bass/Carlsberg tie-up deal but approved British Airways alliance with American Airlines. How's that for consistency?

Step forward Mr Simpson to inject some clarity. In his other incarnation as a member of the cumbrously titled Commission on Public Policy and British Business, Mr Simpson has the chance to strike a blow for all those not as fortunate as GEC.

A report due out from the commission next week will conclude that the Government's competition policy is in a mess. That much we knew. It hardly takes a committee of the great and the good to point out that this administration's track record has been contradictory, weak and driven by short-term political considerations.

Would Labour perform any better? Probably not. The old style corporatism that would creep back in would almost certainly put paid to a rational or consistent competition and mergers policy.

The core of the problem, as the commission's report highlights, is that present legislation places the Secretary of State in a quasi-judicial position when deciding whether or not to allow takeovers to proceed, and on many other matters concerning competition policy. That is always a dangerous place to leave an ambitious politician.

The solution proposed by the commission is to allow ministers to continue making the final decision but then require them to set out their detailed reasoning in public, thus making the whole process transparent. This doesn't go far enough.

While there is something to be said for making sure the buck ultimately stops with elected politicians, there is a stronger case for removing temptation from the grasp of departmental ministers altogether and allowing the courts or some kind of independent cartel office to act as final arbiter. As things stand, competition policy is too

often determined by political whim or favour. Removing these powers from the politicians would go a long way towards depoliticising the process, making pro-competition policy a generally accepted thing across the political divide, as it is in the US.

Break-up of Sears must be on the way

It is just as well as Liam Strong, chief executive of Sears, is a lover of military history. His hero is General Ulysses S Grant, whose motto was: "Find your enemy, then move in on him and hit him hard and keep on hitting him." Sadly for Mr Strong, the City has identified him as the enemy at Sears and has been hitting him hard for some time. He now appears fatally wounded.

The polished, almost impish Ulsterman is unlikely to go quietly, however. He is fighting for his business reputation. When he jetted in to Sears from British Airways five years ago, Mr Strong was thought capable of great things. But indecisiveness and caution appear to have got the better of him. Formats and management have been chopped and changed. And the radical pruning of the Sears portfolio was delayed until it was too late.

Sears has proved a woeful investment in the Strong years. Institutions were giving him one last chance to prove that Sears could trade its way out of difficulties. He has

bogged it and it now appears certain that he will be offered up for sacrifice. To be fair, there is an argument that Sears was always such a mess that was beyond the wit of even the brightest manager. Unfortunately that will not help Mr Strong now. The City is in no mood for excuses.

And what of Sears in all this? As an empire it is crumbling and a break-up is surely not far away. Lord Wolfson, the new chairman of Great Universal Stores and Next, has a theory that most of the strongest retailers are single brand cutters. There was never any worthwhile link between most of the disparate Sears formats. Now the name looks set to be consigned to the dustbin of British retail history. It will not be mourned.

No life insurance revolution yet

The theory behind the move to fuller disclosure of life insurance charges, which began in 1995, was that it would focus the minds of customers on the best value products. As the business then flowed to the better companies, the rest of the industry would have to slash its costs and reduce its charges to remain competitive.

But so far it has not happened, at least judging by this year's statistics from the Personal Investment Authority, which show only a very small overall reduction in charges, and a slight increase among the companies

which were already at the low end of the scale. So soon after the start of the disclosure regime it would perhaps be surprising if the market had been radically transformed. These things take time.

New information must be absorbed and understood. Just as important, the present framework for disclosure allows loopholes which will have to be tackled before customers can rely on the figures. Companies can easily distort the figures by, for example, arranging charging structures so that there is a good return for policies held to maturity but spectacular levels of charging in the first few years. The effect is to slash returns for those who quit early. There is plenty of room for tightening up in this area.

However, let us not be churlish about it. There is evidence that the pressure of disclosure is forcing changes on the industry. Look at the decision by Eagle Star this week to offer a policy with a full refund of charges to those who quit in the first two years.

However, it will take a long time to counteract the damage done by the personal pensions mis-selling scandal and the continuing high level of charges which have discredited private sector pension providers in many eyes – most significantly those of the Labour Party. The party's proposed stakeholder pensions are a way of bypassing high-cost personal pensions by setting up large pooled funds. Having been dragged kicking and screaming into cutting its charges, the insurance industry may find it has left it too late.

Mortgage lending highest in years

Peter Rodgers

Financial Editor

Mortgage lending last year reached a six-year record of £71bn. Barclays Bank said yesterday in a survey that confirmed the buoyant state of the housing market.

At the same time, the CBI reported retail sales over the Christmas period were well up on a year earlier, though it was not the boom predicted by some retailers.

According to the CBI distributive trades survey, which covered sales from 5 December to 2 January, 52 per cent of retailers reported higher levels of business and 19 per cent said they were down.

This left a positive balance of 33 per cent reporting growth, only marginally more than the balance of 31 per cent a year earlier. However, the CBI said the three-month average suggested that underlying growth of retail sales "remains fairly strong".

Barclays found that there were more than twice as many home buyers as sellers in the housing market, with one person in six looking for a new home but only one homeowner in 13 prepared to sell.

Those most likely to put their homes on the market lived in London and the South-east, where prices rose last year.

There was an increase of two-thirds in public confidence that house prices would rise over the next 12 months, said the bank. In London and the South-east 69 per cent believed the value of their homes would increase over the period.

The Barclays survey coincided with evidence of a sharp rise in housing starts, with a 15 per cent increase in the three months to November compared with the previous three months.

Economists at Schroders, the investment bank, forecast house price inflation of between 10 per cent, followed by 8 per cent next year, and said house price gains would exceed mortgage rates for the first time in seven years.

Building societies have suggested 7 to 8 per cent growth in house prices.



Kenneth Clarke (left) meeting his Japanese counterpart, the Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, in Tokyo yesterday. During the Chancellor's three-day visit they will be discussing the state of their respective national economies

Photograph: AFP

Yester

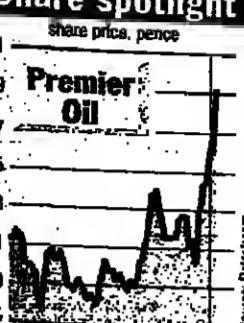
market report / shares

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Data Bank

FTSE 100	4087.0	-0.5
FTSE 250	4517.7	-14.6
FTSE 350	2034.1	-1.6
SEAO VOLUME	758.8m shares,	
	38,131 bargains	
Gilt's Index	93.31	-0.20

Share spotlight



Source: Reuters

Praise pushes Barclays and NatWest to new highs

An upbeat performance by Barclays and National Westminster Bank helped the stock market recover from an indifferent opening. The banking display was prompted by thoughts of share buy-backs and cheerful comments with next month's figures.

Salomon Brothers, the US securities house, is keen on both shares and believes the two banks will indulge in buy-backs. Barclays led blue chips with a 28.5p gain to a 1,06.5p peak and NatWest, almost showered with analytical praise lately, rose 15.5p to 741p, also a new high.

Salomon believes Barclays should produce profits around £2.3bn (£2bn) but feels increased provisions and higher technology costs could cut NatWest profits to £1.1bn although progress will resume this year.

The hunking excitement swamped vague talk Barclays

could bid for Norwich Union, one of the mutual societies planning to convert into a plc this year. In early trading the shares were down 12p before the buy-back story captured the market's imagination.

Cable & Wireless was another in the spotlight. As Hong Kong's last days as a colony melt away, the position of Cable's 58 per cent interest in Hong Kong Telecom has to be resolved.

Most believe Cable's new chief executive, Dick Brown, is near to completing a deal which will sharply reduce the HKT stake and allow Cable to play a major part in the development of the Chinese telecommunications industry. The shares rose 7.5p to 482.5p.

In early trade Footsie was down 37 points. Then a rally set in and when New York displayed renewed confidence blue chips almost managed to eliminate their falls, with Footsie ending just 0.5 points lower.

Oils were firm with much of the action down among the second liners. British Petroleum Syndicate gushed 7.25p to 1,010.5p, reflecting takeover hopes and much higher estimates of the reserves of one of its Gulf of Mexico fields. Cairn Energy, on Bangladesh development hopes as well as talk, added 25p to 468.5p. Premier Oil was also pulled into the speculative cauldron, gaining 2.5p to 39.25p. Aviva Petroleum, following a confident report on its Colombian operations, rose 8p to 41.5p.

But Burmah Castrol was one to miss the fun. A profits downgrade by HSBC James Capel lowered the price 22.5p to 1,086.5p. Capel cut last year's expectation from £168m to £145m and next from £172m to £150m.

Shares, which duly produced a dismal trading statement, lost 4p to 87.5p.

Profit warnings hit computer group Software, off 56p to 197.5p, and metal basher Runcorn, 55p to 112.5p.

Zeneca, already early falls, ended 6.5p higher at 1,637.5p. Estimates about the damage the strong pound is doing seem to have been overdone. It now appears a 6 per cent downgrade is nearer the mark rather

than the 11 per cent suggested on Wednesday.

Imperial Chemical Industries fell 14p to 751p as Capel lowered its profit forecasts by £100m to £650m and by the same amount to £800m. Other chemical shares fell the strain.

Ladbroke shaded 2p to 230p with ABN Amro Hoare Govett moving its stance from buy to hold. Hamitros Connolly, put on 7p to 111p as SBC Warburg banked on the shares on the back of the recovery in the residential property market.

Publishers were in demand, reflecting a sharp fall in newsprint prices. Daily Mail and General Trust gained 5.5p to 1,535p and Mirror Group 4p to 226.5p. Reuters remained weak on competition worries, off 13p to 706.5p.

Matthew Clark rose 18.5p to 277.5p as bid hopes were revived; figures are due next week.

Courtaulds Textiles, a trading statement expected today, fell to 227.5p.

GB Railways, the most popular share among Sharelink clients in the past week, eased 5p to 247.5p.

Calefax & Fowler should be a beneficiary of the revival in the residential housing market. The upmarket fabric and furnishing group seems destined for a trading uplift. Around £2.2m is expected this year. At 115p the shares have been overlooked.

■ Emerald Energy's Cumbrian adventure was given a boost when Seven Seas Petroleum, a Canadian group, announced a "prolific" find 20 miles from where Emerald, unchanged at 4.25p, is due to explore. The Seven Seas field, which may contain more than one billion barrels of oil, was discovered and largely developed by Keith Hewitt, who is leading the Emerald search.

■ Japanese investment trusts are suffering in the wake of the Tokyo share slide. Fleming Japan fell 7p to 182p; it was 289p in May.

Taking Stock



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

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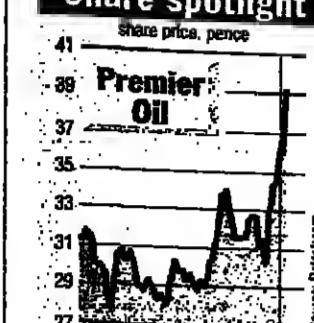
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SEAO VOLUME	758.8m shares,	
	38,131 bargains	
Gilt's Index	93.31	-0.20

Share spotlight



Source: Reuters

Data Bank

Alcoholic Beverages	1,096.97	Stock	Price Chg	Yld	PE/Price
ABF Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00
Amcor	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00
Amoco	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00
Amoco	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00

Distributors

Banks, Merchant	1,096.97	Stock	Price Chg	Yld	PE/Price
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25	14.00

Banks, Retail

1,096.97	Stock	Price Chg	Yld	PE/Price
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25

Breweries, Pubs & Rest

1,096.97	Stock	Price Chg	Yld	PE/Price
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25

Building/Construction

1,096.97	Stock	Price Chg	Yld	PE/Price
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25
ABN Amro	1,096.97	Stock	0.00	1.25

Electronics

1,096.97	Stock</

business

BZW chief needs to produce results fast

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Boom market conditions are leading to record bonuses. That in turn has meant such a rapid escalation in costs that shareholders have found it difficult to benefit from the boom in markets.

According to a recent stock exchange report: "As staff costs are by far the largest single cost element and overall revenue is highly sensitive to changes in dealing profit, the implication is that benign market conditions will easily reduce member firms' profit levels."

The Stock Exchange said that staff costs increased significantly during the year to June 1996. While its figures are confined to equities, derivatives, bonds and money market instruments, observers believe them representative of investment banking more generally.

After remaining flat the previous year, staff costs among the exchange's 250 member firms grew by nine percent to an average £362m per quarter. Bonuses and profit sharing soared by almost £100m to a record £151m and profits were at a record £719m.

But, significantly for the shareholders of these firms, return on capital failed to match this vibrant performance. The average return on capital did rise to above its long-term average – a mere six per cent – but at just 10 per cent, the return is still poor by most standards.

"Despite the recent favourable market conditions, the modest return over the past years would be lower still if the firms in aggregate had not reduced the amount of capital employed," the Stock Exchange said.

In the first part of 1996 the Stock Exchange said firms were able to cut back on the amount of capital they set aside to cover a new directive from Europe, the Capital Adequacy Directive, and

because of restructuring in the industry.

Some investment bankers are eager to counter this claim, arguing that banks and securities houses tend towards caution when it comes to setting aside capital. "We set aside more than is required," said one banker.

This hides the true return on equity, he argues. "It could be the return on equity masks the true success of investment banking business because the

Investment banks' return on capital is still poor by most standards

firms want to be cautious about the amount of capital they set aside even though they have better technology to measure the amount of capital required," said another banker.

He said banks typically used sophisticated measuring tools known as Value at Risk (VAR) to determine the amount of capital they need to cover volatility in the markets. This regularly leads to banks setting aside more capital than regulators require, he said.

Many see this as little more than another excuse for poor

returns. "Risk management may explain high capital needs and consequent poor returns, but it does not excuse them or make this the type of business you would want to invest in," said one City investor.

One analyst pointed to data which showed that as banks moved further into investment banking they gave a lower and lower share of their returns to their shareholders compared to one banker.

In ordinary banking, according to this analyst, only 60 per cent of any excess profit tends to end up with staff. As the bank pushes into investment banking, he said citing recent examples, that proportion quickly rises to 85 per cent or more.

Influential research by McKinsey, the management consultancy firm, concludes that employees of investment banks always do better than shareholders, regardless of market conditions.

"While compensation has risen steadily over the years, volatility in business performance has been absorbed by the shareholders," McKinsey said in its research.

From analysis of the top 10 US investment banks, McKinsey calculates that employees maintained high returns throughout the period from 1980 to 1994, despite a steadily falling return to shareholders. This was even the case in 1994 when the return for shareholders turned negative.

Team entries are now being taken for the annual Marie Curie Brain Game, which takes place at the London South Bank Studios on 6 March, with the BBC's Martyn Lewis as quizmaster.

The Brain Game is now in its seventh year and has so far raised more than £470,000 to help people with cancer.

Anyone wishing to enter a team should call Penny Wheeler on 0171 201 2396. Champagne, dinner and wine are included in the

Comeback by former Pearson blue-blood

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



New role: James Joll is to be non-executive chairman of AIB Asset Management

ticket price – but you will have to supply your own IQ.

Just as GEC's chairman for 33 years, Lord Weinstein, has retired, the company's deputy managing director of the last 12 years, Malcolm Bates, has also left for pastures new.

Mr Bates, 62, has been appointed non-executive chairman of Premier Farnell, the Anglo-American electronic components distributor.

George Simpson who replaced Lord Weinstein as GEC's chairman is under-

stood to have good relations with Mr Bates, so it doesn't look like a post-Weinstein clear-out.

Mr Bates's predecessor, Richard Hanwell, announced his intention to leave Premier last summer after spending five years there, and Premier was prepared to wait until the right replacement came along.

Howard Poulson, Premier's chief executive, says: "He's exactly what we were looking for. He comes from a fairly large organisation,

and we're growing. He is re-

spected in the City, and he has international experience (in the US and Asia). He's also had spells in government and a merchant bank."

Before joining GEC Mr Bates was joint managing director at Grindlays Branksome & ANZ Merchant Bank, after serving two years with the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation.

He is a keen classical music buff, so no doubt he is relieved that he will not be forced to move to Premier's head office in Wetherby, Yorkshire, where concert

halls are rather thinner on the ground than his present home, London.

Tim Eggar, former Energy Minister, has picked up a second plum job just six months after resigning from the Government.

Yesterday Monument Oil & Gas said Mr Eggar, who remains MP for Enfield North until the general election, will join the company's board as a non-executive director.

Just three months ago Mr Eggar caused a stir when he was appointed chairman of MW Kellogg, an oil services company and the UK wing of the American engineering and construction subsidiary of Dresser Industries.

He was believed to have been offered a salary of around £150,000 a year.

A spokesman for Monument is keen to point out that Mr Eggar's more recent appointment isn't just about going for the money. "Mr Eggar and Monument's chief executive Tony Craven Walker go back some way."

Indeed they do. Before Mr Eggar, now 45, went into politics he worked for an investment banking boutique and was non-executive director of Charterhouse Petroleum – the oil company Mr Craven Walker ran before he set up Monument in 1988.

At Monument Mr Eggar will "have particular responsibilities relating to the development of Monument's expanding overseas activities, including the important Caspian Sea region where Monument is already operating a large concession containing existing oil and gas fields in Western Turkmenistan," says Monument.

Monument has decided not to bid in the latest licence round for UK offshore exploration, specifically to avoid any possible conflict of interest with Mr Eggar's recent post as Energy Minister. Who says ethics are dead?

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling			Dollar			D-Mark		
	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.6942	12.10	39.36	1000	—	—	63347	—	—
Canada	2.2985	54.49	164.45	13505	24.23	—	10573	10573	10573
Germany	2.6694	89.61	203.93	15757	80.26	80.87	10000	10000	10000
France	2.6694	89.61	203.93	15757	80.26	80.87	10000	10000	10000
Italy	2.0983	31.45	83.23	15420	28.26	91.01	77.47	77.47	77.47
Japan	136.71	95.91	281.27	1651	48.47	149.17	73.8902	73.8902	73.8902
ECU	1.5739	21.18	66.67	12332	13.14	44.45	10573	10573	10573
Belgium	1.5739	21.18	66.67	12332	13.14	44.45	10573	10573	10573
Denmark	3.0172	222.17	550.55	60040	95.37	256.307	3.0172	3.0172	3.0172
Netherlands	2.5968	62.79	210.22	17659	39.37	121.15	2.5968	2.5968	2.5968
Ireland	1.0883	5.1	16.10	16530	6.3	10.6	0.8386	0.8386	0.8386
Norway	2.2451	160.43	380.45	12532	125.42	125.50	10573	10573	10573
Spain	1.7131	220.16	690.58	63945	41.16	152.10	1.7131	1.7131	1.7131
Switzerland	2.3198	85.76	223.26	13566	40.37	119.14	0.8867	0.8867	0.8867
Australia	2.2076	56.23	147.23	12344	14.16	33.35	0.8867	0.8867	0.8867
Hong Kong	2.2076	56.23	147.23	12344	14.16	33.35	0.8867	0.8867	0.8867
Malaysia	4.2053	0.4	1.4	24264	27.30	80.85	1.7574	1.7574	1.7574
New Zealand	2.3968	64.71	155.16	14947	54.55	97.99	0.8973	0.8973	0.8973
Saudi Arabia	6.3534	0.0	0.4	37302	1.14	5.8	2.3801	2.3801	2.3801
Singapore	2.3382	0.0	0.4	14056	24.19	70.03	0.8920	0.8920	0.8920

Yields calculated on local basis

Yield benchmark

Bond Yields

Country	Syr	yield %	toyr	yield %	Country	Syr	yield %	toyr	yield %
UK	7%	2.24	7%	2.24	US	8.75%	5.00%	5.00%	0.50%
France	8.00%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	Germany	2.50%	1.50%	1.50%	0.50%
Intervention	3.55%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	Japan	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%
Denmark	7.50%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	Belgium	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%
Netherlands	2.50%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	Switzerland	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%
Advances	—	—	—	—	Sweden	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	0.25%

Yields calculated on local basis

Yield benchmark

Yield calculated on local basis

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Points of interest for punters

Ian Davies explains the amateur sport that underpins the hunter chase season

The hunter chase season looms – favourites with no form figures on the race-card to justify their short odds and more amateur jockeys with double-barrelled names than there are surgeons who perform chin implants.

Hunter chases take place at most jumps meetings from 1 February and the point-to-point season that is the foundation for such contests is scheduled to start this weekend.

What are point-to-points? Farcical races for rural types with more inherited wealth than sense and Monday-to-Friday stockbrokers, who delude themselves that they own, train and ride proper racehorses at weekends? Or a fascinating competitive sub-structure to racing under rules, from which champions can, and do, emerge?

The Racing Channel shares the latter school of thought. It had intended to break ground by televising Larkhill's abandoned Saturday meeting, but will still be there to screw the Wiltshire course's New Forest fixture in February, the Heythrop's meeting on 8 April and the Tiverton's event at Stallegg Thorne on 16 April.

The truth is that, while there are those in the point-to-point game who are a danger to themselves and their horses, with over 4,000 point-to-pointers in training, a graded system of racing and point-to-point slumps of including the Gold Cup winner Norton's Coin, Grand

National hero Grittar and, more recently, the Hennessy victor Coome Hill, it is a sport worth understanding for betting on races under National Hunt rules, even if you would not be seen dead at a point-to-point itself.

It would be a shame to take such a stance. For the jumping enthusiast, fed a diet of two chases and four hurdles on cards under rules and suffering high admission prices, the chance to see six three-mile chases either free – by checking walking in – or by paying a fixed price to drive in regardless of how many are packed into the car, is worth considering.

Point-to-points are about strength – the weights carried range from 11lb in ladies' races to 13st 7lb – jumping fences and staying. Virtually all point-to-points are over at least three miles and, although they do not have to conform to jump racing rules on height, number and type of fences, obstacles, while usually smaller than fences under rules, take more jumping than hurdles.

The lowest grade of race is the Confined Maiden. They are for horses which have not won a race of any sort and which have been out with the hunt promoting that day's racing, or from one of the confined hunts (hunts in that vicinity) nominated for that particular meeting. This, of course, usually involves the hounding of foxes or deer but could be a drag hunt.

Having won a Maiden and a Restricted, the restriction being that to run in these a horse cannot have won under rules and have not won an Open, Intermediate or two Restricteds.

There are also Club races – for

horses whose owners are members of a particular club – and the Members'. Subscribers', Farmers' or Hunt races which are

not won under rules, an Open or two Intermediates.

Winners of two Intermediates can then step up to a Confined. Like Confined Maidens, these are for horses hunted within the local region, but previous winners are eligible.

The highest grade is an Open in which a point-to-pointer from any part of the country can run regardless of its previous successes. Opens are broken down into Men's, Ladies' and Mixed events. "They always go a good pace in the Ladies", made commentators never tire of pronouncing.

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sport

NEW FACES FOR '97: Leicester City's teenage prodigy likes to keep himself to himself but soon everyone will want a piece of him. Phil Shaw met the striker who is following in Gary Lineker's footsteps at Filbert Street

Heskey has whole world at his feet

As he strides towards the sponsored car which sports his name in fancy script on the door, the £5-rated striker shoots a sympathetic glance at the trainee who is scrubbing mud off the senior players' boots after their morning practice.

It could be a clip from *Trading Places*, and in a sense it is, except that this scene is from the life of Emile Heskey rather than Eddie Murphy. Barely 15 months ago he was there with the other Leicester City YT boys, dipping his brush in a bucket of murky water on cold mornings at the training ground.

Now that £42-a-week existence has been exchanged for the rather better paid role of British football's most coveted teenager. So many clubs want to relieve Leicester of Heskey's services that Martin O'Neill, the manager, has persuaded him to sign a contract with the club until 1999.

He does not celebrate his 19th birthday until tomorrow, yet already he is on course to join Gary Lineker, Walker's Crisps and Englebert Humperdinck as the biggest things to come out of Leicester. He has two England Under-21 caps, is good with both feet (though better on his left), strong in the air and possesses pace, power and skill. So what's the catch? The answer, so far, is that there isn't one. Unlike those contemporaries whose brash excesses range from tiresome practical jokes to brawling in burger bars, the gently spoken Heskey is a manager's dream. He lives with parents who, like O'Neill, refer to his equable temperament and willingness to oblige. "Emile does what he's told," his father Tyrone said. "He's not the sort you have to pull out of nightclubs at one in the morning."

Moreover, Heskey's progress is being overseen by Jon Holmes, the agent whose handling of Lineker's career has earned a reputation for integrity in a profession not always associated with that quality.

Heskey appears destined to be compared with Lineker, even if his combination of muscularity and deftness is actually more reminiscent of Cyrille Regis. Apart from the Holmes connection, their wholesome images and distinctive middle

names (Gary Winston and Emile Ivanhoe), they attended the same school, City of Leicester, and made the breakthrough with their home-town team.

Whereas Lineker was 18 when his debut came, Heskey was only 16. In one of his earliest games, after Mark McGhee had sent him on at Norwich, Heskey obliged with the winner. Later last season, with Leicester struggling after another bout of managerial upheaval, he scored twice to seal a symbolic victory at McGhee's new club, Wolves, which eased the pressure on O'Neill.

He finished with seven goals to help Leicester into the Premiership via the play-offs. Then it was off to play in the European Youth Championships before coming back to score six goals in the first half of the curtain.

His part in Leicester's other goal against United confirmed his class. With a beautifully cushioned back-heeled flick he set up a stunning strike by Steve Claridge. Holmes recalled: "Claridge picked him up and lifted him up to the crowd as if to say: 'I scared it, but he made it'."

The watching Lineker described Heskey's display as "awesome". He added: "What impresses me is that he improves every time I watch him. The last time I'd seen him live was in the play-off final, so I wasn't really ready for the improvement in him."

"He's got tremendous talent and potential. The important thing now is that he keeps learning. Leicester are my club, close to my heart, but I do think that he's outstanding. They can't go out and buy an Alan Shearer but they've got one of their own."

Heskey acknowledges that the facts of football economics mean he will almost certainly leave Filbert Street in the long run. His ambitions, apart from helping Leicester to establish themselves in the top flight, are "to play in the full England team and for a top club at home or in Spain or Italy".

Which just happens to be the career path of one G Lineker. Scrubbing the stars' footwear, which Heskey remembers as "hard work", may prove to have been the perfect preparation for following in their foot-steps.

rent campaign. "When I was 15 the most I thought I'd be getting at this stage was a run in the reserves," Heskey said. "I realise that young players can do too much too quickly and then burn out, but I'm confident that won't happen to me."

"Now and then, after I've been up against a really hard defender who keeps snapping at your heels like Colin Hendry or Martin Keown, I've felt really tired and wondered if I needed a break. Then again, I think that's pretty normal at this level."

Why not further his education at one of the big clubs? "Well I'm from Leicester and I only live down the road from this place, even though I supported Liverpool as a boy and hero-worshipped John Barnes. The way I look at it is that I couldn't be playing higher than the Premiership anyway, and by living at home I can keep my feet on the ground with my family and friends around."

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Sacchi prepares to turn the screws

added. "In reality, we are not yet a team – we are merely a sort of representative group and nothing more."

Zimbabwe A Winchester Crown Court on Tuesday, Bruce Grobbelaar stands trial on match-fixing charges. This weekend he will be between the posts as usual, but for Zimbabwe in a World Cup qualifier and not for his club, Plymouth Argyle.

Zimbabwe's coach, the former Sunderland player Ian Porterfield, confirmed yesterday that Grobbelaar will be in the starting line-up for Sunday's game against Togo.

"It's a good boost for us, having Bruce," Porterfield said.

The best player this country has ever produced.

"I know Bruce's case is coming up, but I think he's the type of guy who has handled pressure in his life before. I'm sure he'll be OK."

Uruguay

Argentina meet their neighbours and bitter rivals, Uruguay, in a World Cup qualifier for the first time on Sunday in the Uruguayan resort of Punta del Este, where the atmosphere is tense.

Last year, one Argentinian was killed in the border town of Paysandú in a skirmish among rival fans after a match involving Argentina in the Copa América, which Uruguay hosted. This weekend, about 6,000 Argentinians are expected in the 70,000 crowd at the Centenario stadium.

One bizarre aspect of the security precautions is that fans with painted faces have been banned. "Paint on the face makes identification difficult," Didier Operi, Uruguay's Interior Minister, said.

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Rupert Metcalf

Vase offers meeting of mergers

Non-League notebook

RUPERT METCALF

Tomorrow the FA Carlsberg Vase reaches the fourth-round stage, after which 16 teams will feel they have Wembley very much in their sights.

One tie which brings two very different clubs together sees Collier Row & Romford travel from suburban Essex to rural Wiltshire to take on Bemerton Heath Harlequins.

Both clubs have been in existence for less than a decade and were formed as a result of mergers. Harlequins played their first game in 1989 when Bemerton Athletic of the Wilshire League joined with two lesser local clubs, Moon FC and Bemerton Boys FC, and they now play in the Jarrow Wesssex League.

The merger of Romford and Collier Row was more recent – last summer – and more contentious. Romford, once one of the country's strongest amateur clubs, were reborn in 1992, 14 years after the original club.

The Goodwin family want to see their club in the GM Vauxhall Conference – but of more immediate interest is this season's FA Vase. Collier Row & Romford saw off this column's tip for the Vase, Braintree, on a frozen pitch just before Christmas, since when their manager, Donald McGovern, has strengthened his squad by signing Guy Caesar, the former Arsenal defender. He has joined another Highbury old boy, Martin Hayes, the former West Ham goalkeeper Allen McKnight and the prolific striker Steve Portway at Sungate, the outgoing Collier Row chairman.

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